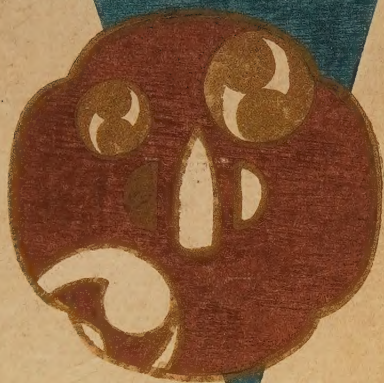


CHUSHINGURA



J. Inouye

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CHUSHINGURA



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CHUSHINGURA,
OR THE
TREASURY OF LOYAL RETAINERS

BY
TAKEDA IZUMO,
MIYOSHI SHORAKU, and NAMIKI SENRYU

TRANSLATED BY
JUKICHI INOUYE

ILLUSTRATED

TOKYO
NAKANISHI-YA
1910.

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PREFACE.

Seventeen years ago appeared a translation of the *Chushingura*, in which I omitted three acts of the play with the object of making the thread of the story continuous. The edition, which was a small one, was soon exhausted. I was lately asked by Messrs. Nakanishiya to touch up my old translation for republication. I have, however, taken this opportunity to make a new and complete translation of the play; and I may say that the omissions in the present translation do not exceed ten lines, if so many, such omissions being unavoidable as where the passages convey no coherent meaning or where, notably in the bantering of Yuranosuke with Okaru in the seventh act, they are too indelicate for translation. In spite of its numerous defects, I trust the present work will at least give the reader some idea of the most popular version of the most famous vendetta in Japanese history.

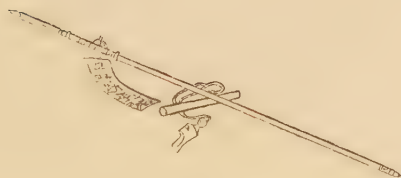
With a view to assist the reader to understand the spirit of the play, I have prefaced it with a lengthy introduction, in the preparation of which I received valuable assistance from Mr. Sosaku Nomura, of the Meiji Gakuin, Tokyo, to whom my best thanks are due.

JUKICHI INOUYE.

Tokyo, Japan,
September, 1910.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
INTRODUCTION.....	i.
CHUSHINGURA.	
ACT I.....	I
ACT II.....	15
ACT III.....	33
ACT IV.....	65
ACT V.....	87
ACT VI.....	105
ACT VII.....	135
ACT VIII (The Bridal Journey).....	171
ACT IX.....	179
ACT X.....	215
ACT XI.....	251



INTRODUCTION.

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE.

Language, the vehicle of thought as it is, conveys not unfrequently different impressions to different persons; especially is this the case when that language is not the hearer's mother tongue. We may take in the general drift of what is said to us in a foreign tongue, but fail to understand the meaning which lies hidden beneath the surface. In reading a novel we may be unable to discriminate between a national characteristic and a personal idiosyncrasy; the rhythm and cadence of poetry may appeal to us in vain; and we may take too seriously humorous language and mistake the vulgar and coarse for the refined and elegant.

The Japanese language, which comes of a stock totally different to the Indo-European languages, has grown in a state of almost complete isolation, and in course of time, developed characteristics of its own. One of these is the abundance of vowel-sounds, for the consonants are almost invariably accompanied by vowels. Another is the frequency with which connective enclitics occur in a sentence. The Japanese is an agglutinative language, and the repetition of meaningless form-words naturally deprives the language of force and allows of little change in the order of speech. Although there are other characteristics, the frequency of enclitics and form-words and abundance of vowels in individual words are the most important.

It is hardly necessary to dwell here upon the difficulty of translating a *yoruri*, or semi-lyrical drama, like the *Chushingura*, especially as it abounds in word-plays. In the

phonetic system of the Japanese language, which has a comparatively few consonantal sounds, such sounds being, as has already been stated, seldom unaccompanied by vowels, the variety of syllables is small and so, accordingly, is the number of their combinations, with the result that there is an abundance of homonymous words. The identity or similarity of sound is utilised to produce words that may be taken in more senses than one. Often, also, sentences that sound sweet and graceful are taken wholesale from literature of a former age and inserted so skilfully that one fails to detect any incongruity in the mosaic so formed; and yet, unless one is versed in the literature which has been drawn upon, it would be difficult to make out the drift of the passages in which they occur. These peculiarities are not, it is true, confined to *joruri*, for they may be found in all other works of lyrical nature; but they give a characteristic charm to *joruri*, and make it a very difficult task to translate a *joruri* into a European language. Thus, the eighth act of the *Chushingura*, which is made up of sentences and phrases of this description, fails to convey much meaning when translated into English.

THE PERIOD OF THE AKO VENDETTA.

In spite of these linguistic difficulties, an attempt has been made, it is to be hoped not altogether without success, to give in the present work the plot and spirit of the *Chushingura*; but for the full comprehension of the play and its *motif*, the reader should possess some acquaintance with the social condition, manners, and ideas of the time to which it refers.

The vendetta of the retainers of Ako, which forms the subject of the play, took place early in 1703; and the play saw the light forty-five years later, in 1748. It was a production of the golden age of Tokugawa

literature. During the little more than a century and a half that have since elapsed, remarkable changes have come over society. The peace which had lasted under the Tokugawa Shogunate for two centuries and a half was rudely broken by the cannon's roar off the coast of Uraga; and soon after, with the Restoration of the Imperial authority, the nation began to introduce the civilisation of the West. Our wars with China and Russia have greatly influenced the whole society, and our customs and manners undergone marked changes. In these days it is difficult to form a clear idea of the state of society under the feudal régime. Few of those people to-day who leave Shimbashi by the night express to awake next morning at Kobe have a definite conception of the *daimyo's* procession that used to be borne on the shoulders of coolies across the River Oi which they pass in their sleep. The postal halting-places have become railway stations, and express couriers have been replaced by telegraph. And we can hardly imagine how cheap life was held in the old times when, for the loss of their lord's treasured article, retainers who had faithfully served him and his fathers had to surrender their lives and family estate; and we can hardly bring ourselves into sympathy with those lovers who, taking their lives into their own hands, have become subjects of songs for their suicide. When even we Japanese at the present time are thus out of touch with much that was of common occurrence in our forefathers' days two centuries ago, it is only to be expected that Old Japan should appear almost incomprehensible to the Western peoples whose manners, customs, and ways of life are totally different to ours. It is therefore believed that it would not be an altogether needless task to make a few remarks here on the condition, manners, and thought of society at that time.

THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE.

Before treating, however, of the Genroku age in which the vendetta of the Ako retainers took place, which has left such a mark upon the history of this country, we must glance at the period of the Tokuwaga Shogunate. That period lasted two hundred and sixty-four years from the appointment to the Shogunate of Tokugawa Iyeyasu in 1603 to the surrender of political power to the Emperor by Tokugawa Yoshinobu in 1678. Towards the close of the Ashikaga Shogunate (1338-1573), the country was torn by factions and plunged in civil war. But the great hero Toyotomi Hideyoshi, better known as the Taiko, gave the country a brief respite from war. The predominance of his house, however, lasted only for two generations; and on the defeat of his son by Iyeyasu in 1600 at Sekigahara, supreme power fell into Iyeyasu's hands, and the campaigns of Osaka in 1614 and 1615 put an end to the Toyotomi line. The nation now bowed to Iyeyasu's authority, and his house ruled over it for more than two centuries and a half.

THE IMPERIAL COURT.

Society during the Tokugawa period may be generally divided into four classes, the *kuge*, the samurai, the common people, and the lowest classes. The Emperor reigned over the country at Kyoto; and around him were the Imperial princes, some of whom were qualified to succeed to the Throne in case of failure of Imperial issue. The *kuge*, or Court nobles, numbered about one hundred and thirty; their titles and offices were hereditary. They were jealous of their social position. They attended daily at the Imperial Court; but their duties mostly concerned the grant and deprivation of Court rank, various ceremonies, and Court etiquette. Administrative affairs were entirely

in the hands of the feudal government. All business between it and the Imperial Court was transacted by a few high officials.

The political authority over the whole nation was held by the feudal government. The feudal system was first established by Minamoto no Yoritomo towards the close of the twelfth century ; at first there was no intention of replacing the Imperial Court in the government of the country ; but from various causes the political and military power fell into the Shogun's hands. The Emperor merely watched over the sacred treasures of his House and delegated political power to the feudal government. During the civil wars the fortunes of Imperial Court seriously declined ; but Ota and Toyotomi, who were loyal to the Throne, presented landed estate to the Court when they had brought the country into peace. Tokugawa frequently built Imperial palaces and presented funds for household expenses ; and the Imperial House was placed in easier circumstances. But it was the policy of the Tokugawa family to hold the real power over the nation. In 1614, Iyeyasu established regulations for the control of the *kuge*, by which although the real power of the Imperial House was diminished, the principle of loyalty to the Throne and distinction of lord and subject were strictly maintained, and Tokugawa himself set the example to the nation by his reverent treatment of the Imperial Family. Although this attitude towards the Throne was a policy of Iyeyasu, it was also an expression of the innate loyalty and patriotism of the people. Thus, the dignity of the Imperial Family remained unimpaired ; and it may be seen from the original cause of the Ako revenge how high importance was attached to the reception of Imperial envoys.

THE SAMURAI.

The samurai were all under the control of the feudal

government. Those whose annual stipends were not less than ten thousand *koku* of rice were called *daimyo*, those below them were *hatamoto*, and the lowest were *kenin*. The *daimyo* were of three classes, lords of provinces, lords of castles, and lords of domains without castles. They ruled over their domains. Asano Takumi-no-Kami, the vengeance for whose death forms the subject of the *Chushin-gura*, was the lord of the castle of Ako in the province of Harima; his annual income was 50,000 *koku*; he belonged to the second category of *daimyo*. The *daimyo* came in turn to Yedo for a short stay; and among their retainers, some remained permanently in Yedo, while others accompanied their lords on their journeys to and from the Shogun's city. The samurai who left their clans and drifted about, or for some reason, lost their stipends, were known as *ronin*. Such were the retainers of Ako who lost their stipends through the fall of their lord's house.

THE COMMON PEOPLE.

By common people were meant the merchant and agricultural classes. They were not permitted to wear swords or have family names; and they were known only by their individual names. Thus, merchants and artisans were called by their trades and farmers by their villages.

Besides the above-mentioned *kuge*, samurai, and the common people were the lowest classes. Although there were in this way four grades of society, such grades did not regulate the material circumstances of the people belonging to them; but as a whole the *kuge* were poor and the *daimyo* wealthy. With the samurai wealth was considered contrary to the principles of Bushido; and while they made it their pride that they possessed no more than a hat to shelter them from wind and rain, few tried to accumulate wealth; but as the samurai spirit began to decline, there were many who sought for

wealth. The most wealthy were to be found among the common people, for, debarred from the rights and privileges enjoyed by the samurai, they directed all their energies to money-making; it must, however, be added that many of them also lived in abject poverty.

BUSHIDO AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

The vendetta of the retainers of Ako was an outward expression of the spirit of Bushido. A few words must be here added regarding Bushido, a peculiar product of our country, which reached its highest development under the Tokugawa régime.

The people of the Eastern Provinces, the centre of which was Yedo, were from the oldest times noted for their fearless courage. Moreover, when Yedo became the seat of the feudal government, the samurai who had been engaged in rapine and slaughter during the wars preceding the Shogunate of Tokugawa, flocked to the city and made it their place of residence. The city became the second home of the simple and intrepid samurai of Mikawa, the province, of which Tokugawa Iyeyasu was originally *daimyo*; and the retainers of other clans also repaired thither in great numbers. In fact, Yedo was the centre of neither commerce nor industry; it had been established solely for the residence of samurai; and there hundreds of thousands of samurai gathered to practise military arts. In short, in Yedo, Bushido was in greatest vigour. The principal elements of Bushido were three in number:—

The first of these was the high esteem for military valour and practice of military arts. It was the most important of the samurai's accomplishments. In remote antiquity, the two families of Mononobe and Otomo took to the profession of arms and guarded the Imperial Court. It became their hereditary office to act as the Imperial bodyguard. All their descendants were

trained in military arts and grew up to be men of high resolution and integrity. They were taught to refrain from all acts likely to bring dishonour upon their family name. When, however, the Fujiwara family came into possession of the political power, military affairs began to decline and give place to civil affairs which were then held in high esteem. The military profession was regarded with contempt and looked upon as fit only for barbarians. This slighting of the military calling was due to communication at this period with China, whose civilisation so dazzled the Japanese that they caught the literary effeminacy which then afflicted that country. The samurai of Kyoto the capital gradually lost their former military spirit. But Bushido was not seriously affected by its decline in Kyoto; for this effeminacy was confined to the capital and its immediate neighbourhood. Those, for whose ambition Kyoto was too small, mostly migrated into the country where they strengthened their position. And Bushido found its home in the country and there it developed without obstruction. These ambitious men lived in different provinces; and when their families grew too bulky, the members established themselves in other places. Most of them became powerful men with large domains. They had many followers, who became their private soldiers. The relations between these local magnates and their adherents continued unchanged for ages. The lord took care of his adherents and instructed and encouraged them so that they might prove of service to him in an emergency, and they, on their part, trained themselves in military arts so that they might be able to show their loyalty to their lord. Thus, Bushido was driven out of the political centre of the land by the introduction of Chinese civilisation and grew up in the country, especially in the Eastern Provinces, because those provinces were lower in the degree of civilisation and at the same time

retained a spirit peculiar to them. Military training was pursued to the highest pitch in the East; the samurai, whether leader or follower, considered it cowardly to show the back to the enemy, and always feared to bring dishonour upon their family name. They looked upon it as shame to themselves not to die when their lord was hard pressed and not to help another in his difficulty. Their own shame was the shame upon their parents, their family, their house, and their whole clan; and with this idea deeply impressed upon their minds, the samurai, no matter of what rank, held their lives light as feather when compared with the weight they attached to the maintenance of a spotless name. In their breasts was always present the thought that an unstained reputation was of highest value to those whose profession was of arms, and it was disgrace upon a samurai to be spoken of as having fled for fear of the enemy. Especially, when the Minamoto and Taira clans became the two great military families in the eleventh century, was this spirit carefully instilled into the hearts of their followers; and the characteristics of the samurai became more highly developed and the path of conduct of the subject towards his lord, of the soldier towards his commander, and of samurai towards each other became clearly defined to a degree unparalleled in any other age or country of the world. This path was called the path of loyalty, which was the second essential element of Bushido. Thus, by failure to follow this path, the samurai forfeited the name, he was despised and held up to scorn as a leper and a man of no spirit. Such contempt, once a man was exposed to it, was heaped upon him to the end, and he himself felt it keenly until death; and however wealthy he might subsequently become, he was too ashamed to hold up his face in public. If, on the other hand, he strictly followed the path of loyalty, he was constantly praised by friend and foe alike; and consequently, if a

man was born of an unexceptionable lineage and had any military prowess of his ancestors to boast of, he would, in the battle-field even when a question of a few minutes was of vital importance, stand up before the enemy and make boast of it to them. The third essential element of Bushido to be mentioned is the high estimation of honesty and integrity and disregard of pecuniary profit. It was considered most despicable to change one's mind for lucre. Even when he was offered a thousand pieces of gold, the true samurai should not for a moment alter his original intention. The samurai gave money but did not lend it; and he received money, but did not borrow it. To borrow money with a promise of repayment was to rely upon one's life continuing till the morrow, which was unworthy of a samurai. At the time of the invasion of Korea towards the close of the sixteenth century, Hinenō Hirotsugu, before he set out on his mission to that country, borrowed a hundred pieces of silver from Kuroda Josui, and upon his return he went to Kuroda to repay the money; but the latter told him that he had not lent it in hope of its being repaid, and in the end he absolutely refused to take it back.

The essential elements of Bushido may appear, when only these three are mentioned, to be very simple; but that is far from being the case, for there are many other minor elements which go to its making. But one that deserves special mention, and may indeed be deduced from the elements above described, was the keeping of one's word. Once anything was undertaken, it was dishonourable not to carry it out even at the sacrifice of life, property, and all that one possessed. Thus, in a bond of debt often appeared the words "in case of failure to repay this money, I shall be no longer looked upon as a man," or "if I should by any chance neglect to repay this money, I should not utter a word of protest even if

you laughed at me before company." From these words the honesty and simplicity of the samurai may be readily inferred. The contempt for money and money-making which they expressed at all times had no doubt been handed down from the period of civil wars, when the whole country being overrun by soldiery, those who possessed wealth were in constant danger of attack and robbery. To the warriors whose lives could never be called their own, money was only a means of temporary gratification of their senses; for if they fell into straits, they merely robbed, and in war time money was of less value to them than a mouthful of food or a sword, and it was only natural that they should be utterly indifferent to its acquisition. Kono Moronao is made in the *Chushingura* to take bribes, because the authors wished to exhibit him as a man utterly bereft of the Bushido spirit and so contrast him with the loyal retainers who are the mirror of chivalry and single-heartedness; for the same reason he is shown up as a poltroon. The qualities above referred to are the characteristics of Bushido; and that they composed the spirit peculiar to our country will be patent to all who study the history of Japan from the oldest times. But Bushido underwent slight changes with the progress of the times, and coming under the influence of Buddhism and Confucianism, it was brought to perfection under the Tokugawa régime, especially in the Genroku era in which the Ako vendetta took place.

"SEPPUKU."

It would be tedious to describe one by one the customs of the samurai, which may be taken as the outward expressions of Bushido in its most developed form; but perhaps the most conspicuous among them was the vendetta, to which, on account of the important part it plays in the *Chushingura*, we will refer later on. Another

custom was the *seppuku* (or *harakiri*), or self-disembowelment. It was an act inspired by the spirit of Bushido which urges loyalty and considers life light as compared with the preservation of one's honour. Death was looked upon as an atonement for all faults and errors. One who had acted contrary to the principles of Bushido did not wait for others to lay their hands upon him, but slew himself without hesitation; and he who showed fear or irresolution on such occasion was looked upon as bringing dishonour upon the samurai's name. The death of Kanpei in the sixth act of the *Chushingura* is an instance in point. A samurai guilty of a serious offence which deserved capital punishment was sentenced to commit *seppuku*. In such case the order to commit *seppuku* instead of being beheaded like a common criminal, was looked upon as an honour, as may be seen in the fourth act of the *Chushingura* where Enya Hangwan is condemned to death. A curious form of *seppuku* was the *junshi*, the suicide of a retainer upon the death of his lord in order to serve him still in the other world. This custom, which was in great vogue in the early years of the Tokugawa régime, was founded upon the principle of Bushido that it was dishonourable for a samurai to serve a second master. Some went so far as to look upon it as a stain upon their honour to serve the heir of their dead master and so followed him to the grave. The feudal government, however, prohibited this practice by law and threatened with severe punishment all who violated it; and by the Genroku era the *junshi* was entirely discontinued.

VENDETTA.

We may now proceed to touch upon the custom of vendetta. Among the most marked social products of the Tokugawa period must be mentioned vendetta. It was the favourite subject for the novels, ballads, and plays of

the period and was treated so frequently that it seemed to be the peculiar product of that period. But the vendetta was not peculiar to that age. It made its first appearance some fifteen centuries ago and was known in every period of our national history. The revenge of the Soga Brothers, for instance, who killed their enemy in 1193 seventeen years after their father's murder, is the most famous of our vendettas and was sung in songs, played on the stage, and treated in novels, of the Tokugawa period. There were many vendettas before the Tokugawa age; and what made them appear peculiar to that age was the strong contrast they presented to the idle, luxurious life which was resulting from the long-continued peace under the Tokugawa rule; and for that reason they attracted the greatest attention of the nation.

A vendetta is the wreaking of vengeance upon a man's murderer by his relations, friends, or retainers. It took place not only when the murderer killed his victim with his own hand, but also when he incited another to the act, or even when one struck and killed a man without intent to murder. Strictly-speaking, it was of course the duty of the state to punish a murder and not to leave it to private vengeance; a vendetta was, in fact, an act done in defiance of the punitive right of the state and subversive of the social order. In the Yedo period, society was, it is true, kept in strict order, and the relations between lord and retainer and between father and child were rigorously observed; but it was also a period in which an intimate connection subsisted between morality and law, and the vendetta was recognised as an unavoidable act originating in the intense feelings of loyalty and filial piety. It was permitted on moral grounds as the result of the teachings of Bushido and Confucianism. It may here be added that although the vendetta of the Ako retainers was a subject of discussion

among contemporary and later scholars, the question turned upon whether the retainers were justified in looking upon Kira Yoshinaka as their true enemy; no doubt was ever expressed upon the legitimacy of vendetta itself.

The formal procedure for carrying out a vendetta in the Tokugawa period was first for the avenger to apply for permission, if he lived in Kyoto, to the deputy-governor, if in Yedo, to the city magistrate, and if in the provinces, to the local lord; and these reported it to the central government, which then entered it in the official register and gave the required permission. Now, the murderer seldom remained quietly in the locality where the act was committed, but almost invariably fled to other territories; and therefore it was probable that if the avenger killed him as he always did regardless of time or place immediately he discovered him, he would cause a disturbance there and might be brought to account for it. If, however, his vendetta was entered in the official register, he was permitted to kill his enemy anywhere. In such case, the local officials came as soon as they heard that a vendetta had taken place, and if they were satisfied that it had been officially registered, they took no further note of the matter. However, even when it had not been registered, they usually let the avenger go if it was shown that he had not been actuated by malice, but had done the deed from loyalty or filial piety.

If, after the official permission had been obtained, the enemy died before the revenge could be taken, it had to be reported with satisfactory proofs of the death. Such procedure was considered necessary, because after the official registration, the avenger took leave of his lord, who assisted him in every way and made him parting presents, and the avenger naturally set out full of hope; but it sometimes happened that when he was unable to find his enemy after a long search and at the same time his purse

became lighter every day, he longed for home and with his first resolution now gone, he grew anxious to give up the fruitless search. In such cases he might come home, pretending that his enemy was dead. And it was to prevent such fraud that satisfactory proofs of the enemy's death were required to free the avenger from the duty which he had voluntarily undertaken.

The avenger was usually the murdered man's inferior, although sometimes he was his superior in position. He was in most cases his son, younger brother, relative, servant, pupil, or intimate friend.

The person upon whom vengeance was to be wreaked was not necessarily a bad man. In the early years of the Tokugawa régime, duels were of frequent occurrence among the samurai; they seldom discussed which were right and which wrong in a dispute. If there was a difference, one would exclaim, "Come, let us fight it out;" to which the other would as lightly express his willingness, and they drew their swords on the spot. Thus, a duel was an appeal to arms made by mutual agreement; and the vanquished had no cause of resentment against the victor. Yet his surviving family often took up his cause and revenged themselves upon his adversary. Sometimes justice was on the enemy's side and the avenger was entirely in the wrong. Such cases were unavoidable when vendetta had the moral sanction of the nation and was practically a duty imposed upon the nearest relative of the murdered man.

Although the vendetta may be said to have been concluded when the avenger had killed his man, yet the avenger himself was sometimes looked upon as the enemy by his victim's family, who, thereupon, commenced a vendetta against him. Next, the first avenger's family would upon his death take revenge upon the second avenger, and so on, so that the feud would become as

interminable as a Corsican vendetta. To put a stop to such endless vendettas, the Tokugawa Government strictly prohibited secondary vendettas.

Again, in a duel between the avenger and his enemy, the former was not unfrequently killed. Hence, the avenger sometimes was accompanied by his second. The second usually fought the enemy when the principal was in danger of being beaten; but in some cases he fought side by side with the principal. That was mostly the case when the avenger was a child or a woman, who had no chance against the adversary. It may be mentioned that when the government was reorganised upon the accession of the present Emperor, a law was issued in 1873 strictly prohibiting vendettas.

EARLY YEARS OF THE TOKUGAWA PERIOD.

In the early years of the Tokugawa period, the samurai still retained the rough and violent manners of the period of civil wars; they despised gentleness as characteristic of the effeminate people of Kyoto and luxurious living as peculiar to the merchant class, while they trained themselves in military arts and fostered military spirit. Such was the turbulence of those times that even merchants wore swords when they walked the streets. They had indeed need of them; for innocent men were cut down in the streets at night to try the temper of swords. Servants who were guilty of theft, had failed to accompany their master as he came home on horseback, or eloped with female fellow-servants, were punished at the will of their master, who tested the edge of a new sword upon their necks. The feudal government frequently issued laws to put an end to these violent acts.

“THE OTOKODATE.”

This prevalence of strong military spirit gave rise to

a peculiar class of men, known by many names, the most common of which was *otokodate*. In all classes of society in the beginning of the Tokugawa rule, rough manners and turbulent spirit prevailed; but more especially among the *hatamoto*, or immediate feudatories of the Shogun, was it the case. They were samurai of Mikawa, the native province of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, and retained the simple manners and intrepid spirit of their country home; they prided themselves upon the fact that small as their stipends were, they were under the direct command of the Shogun, and in their pride, they lorded it over the streets of Yedo. Among the merchant class were some who were indignant at the arrogance of the samurai and their contemptuous treatment of the merchant and agricultural classes; they also trained themselves in military arts and opposed the tyranny of the military class; and they formed a special class under the name of *otokodate*. These *otokodate* mostly lived by gambling; they made it their business to take up other people's quarrels or to mediate in them; and they spent their lives to a large extent in the pleasure-quarters. Yet their ideal was not inconsistent with the principles of Bushido; for they took pleasure in helping the weak and crushing the strong, they kept their word with the most scrupulous care, and if a mere stranger respectfully begged for their assistance, they would help him even at the risk of their lives. They refused to be beaten in anything by others, a word of insult was enough to draw their sword out of the scabbard, and the least grudge was repaid; they hated to work for profit and thought it undignified to count money. They went to eating-houses and ate their full; and if they had no money, they went away without paying. If they were pressed for payment, they used their fists; but if they were treated with respect and allowed to leave without payment, they came again when they

had money and repaid more than their debt. These *otokodate* infested every part of the city in the early years of the Tokugawa period and so much damage was caused by their quarrels that they were suppressed in the Genroku era. They were punished with such severity that their number gradually diminished; but their customs did not altogether disappear. Among the ordinary citizens of Yedo were many who esteemed the samurai spirit of the first years of Tokugawa and the manners of the *otokodate*. In what is called the Yedo spirit is to be detected much which originated with the *otokodate*; for the true-born natives of Yedo show to this day the same hatred of being beaten by others, love of quarrel, contempt for skin-flints, and inability to keep the day's earnings until the next day. Amakawaya Gihei, in the tenth act of the *Chushingura*, is a good sample of a chivalrous-spirited merchant after the manner of the *otokodate*.

THE GENROKU PERIOD

Some eighty years after the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate began the Genroku period. The Shogun at the time was the fourth of Iyeyasu's line. No insurrection was feared at home and there was as little danger of the country's isolation being disturbed by foreign invasion, for no foreigner was allowed to trade in Japan with the exception of the Dutch and Chinese, whose trade was confined to Nagasaki. The country, in short, enjoyed absolute peace and grew in wealth and prosperity. Such was the condition of the land in the Genroku period, which takes its name from the Genroku era (1689-1701) and extended over some fifty years beginning with the Tenna era in 1681 and ending with the Kyoho era in about 1735. It was a period of great importance in the history of Japanese manners, institutions, and literature. The first years of the Tokugawa régime were a period of

turbulent militarism and its last years that of indolence and immorality; in the Genroku period, however, the rough militaristic spirit was nearly gone, but the people had not yet fallen into weak and effeminate ways; luxury and extravagance had commenced their sway, but the brave military spirit had not yet vanished. It marked, like the Heian period of the ninth and tenth centuries, the highest stage of Japanese civilisation; and with the dark age of internecine wars intervening between these two periods, it was, indeed, our age of renaissance.

During this period, Bushido, in spite of some evils that attached to it, reached its highest level. This peculiar spirit of Japan had been influenced in the earlier ages by the doctrines of Buddhism; but coming under the influence of Confucianism when the Tokugawa family came into power, it became a cult of complete growth and took its final form early under the Tokugawa rule. But Bushido, like all other institutions, was bound to undergo changes as time went on. Under Shogun Iyetsuna (1650-1680), the fourth of the Tokugawa line, the old sturdy military spirit began to decline in Yedo; and under his successor Tsunayoshi (1680-1709), the Genroku period came in with its love for luxurious living, display, and immorality, with the result that Bushido which had been developed to the highest degree among the warriors of the Eastern Provinces left Yedo, the centre of those provinces, and sought refuge in the country, where it remained unimpaired among the simple samurai of the daimiates. The Ako vendetta was a striking instance of its hold upon the country samurai.

The changes of manners under the Tokugawa Shogunate spread as a rule from Yedo to the provinces. But in the early years of that Shogunate Yedo was not yet the centre of Japanese civilisation; for though it held the foremost position in military arts, it was in literature,

art, and other things inferior to Kyoto and Osaka which were as cities far older. The Eastern Provinces changed their manners by imitating those of these two western cities. But the manners and customs of the latter cities were at the time almost directly opposite to those of Yedo. They were soft, frivolous, and elegant to effeminacy; Kyoto had, since it became the capital of the country in 794, been the centre of Japanese civilisation, while Osaka which had been from the oldest times an important port for vessels sailing to and from the western provinces, became especially prosperous from the days of Hideyoshi the Taiko (1536-97); and while they had long lost the simplicity and straightforwardness of more primitive districts, they were less moved by a sense of honour, more impelled by desire for wealth, and became more and more luxurious as they advanced in civilisation, and naturally grew more fond of ostentation.

The characteristics of the Genroku period were then represented by the manners and tastes of Kyoto and Osaka. In that period, though Yedo was firmly established as the political centre of the country, it had to import from Kyoto and Osaka their literature and customs, which were thereupon acclimatised in Yedo. The true Yedo spirit and manners did not come into being until a century later, that is, the beginning of the nineteenth century.

THE MERCHANT CLASS.

The centre of the literature and customs of Kyoto and Osaka was not, as in Yedo, the samurai, but the merchant. The merchant who had, until a generation or two previously, been oppressed by class distinctions, came in the long period of peace to acquire wealth and extravagant habits as the standard of living rose. For as the means of transportation and communication develop-

ed, many of them made large fortunes by engaging in building and public works. There were not a few of these noted men of wealth in Osaka and Kyoto. In Osaka the world was the merchants'; and the samurai, however high he might hold up his head, had to yield in actual power to the common people.

As there were many wealthy men among the merchants who spent money freely, they were the best customers in theatres and in pleasure-quarters. The samurai, too, grew in time to envy the merchant's popularity and began finally to imitate his ways. The manner in which Yuranosuke is drawn as a man about town in the seventh act of the *Chushingura*, may be due partly to the fact that the authors were all of the merchant class; but it also serves to show the general behaviour of samurai in pleasure-quarters.

THE PLEASURE-QUARTERS.

But a merchant could only be a merchant; the strict social distinctions could no more than the hereditary character of family occupations be set aside. And the only place where the merchants could spend money lavishly without fear of the samurai and without distinction of classes, was the pleasure-quarters. The attitude of the people of that time towards those quarters was different to the attitude of men of the present time. Love between the sexes was condemned by the moral teaching of the time; and it was not to be thought of that men and women should exchange love of their own free will. Not only women, but men, usually left entirely to their parents the arrangements for their marriages; and when the husband and wife lived together, they appeared to the world somewhat in the relations of master and servant, however much they might really love each other. Some of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's plays depict men and

women freed from all trammels and indulging in unfettered love. These plays won the admiration and sympathy of the world because they were written with peculiar skill by their great author. But otherwise, the people of the period regarded such characters as being immoral and licentious; and while they pitied them for their sufferings, they condemned no less their lack of chastity. In the pleasure-quarters was to be found a world free from social restraint and from fetters of morality, where could be seen women in their natural mood, untrammelled by restraints of any kind. These quarters were outlets for the depressed spirits caused by the pressure of the negative policy of the Tokugawa government, where all ranks and grades of society could associate freely and on equal terms. The quarters in Yedo, Kyoto, and Osaka were frequent subjects of plays and novels of the time; indeed, it may be said that more than half the literature of the Genroku period was devoted to these quarters and their inhabitants.

THE "CHUSHINGURA."

The revenge of the Ako retainers took place in the twelfth month of the fifteenth year of Genroku (January, 1703); and few months later, a play founded on it was already on the stage. In 1706, the Takemotoza, the great puppet-theatre of Osaka, put up a ballad drama by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, called *Kenkohoshi-Monomi-guruma*, upon the same subject, which the same great dramatist followed up with another, entitled *Goban-Tai-heiki*, in which the story was carried back to the time of the first Shogun of the Ashikaga line in the middle of the fourteenth century. In this play occur for the first time the names of Kono Moronao and Enya Hangwan, noted warriors of that period, as those of the two enemies whose fatal quarrel gave rise to the great vendetta, and also the loyal chief councillor of Asano appears as Oboshi

Yuranosuke and the humblest of the loyal retainers, Teraoka Kichiemon, is disguised under the name of Teraoka Heiyemon. After this, several plays of more or less merit were performed in Yedo, Kyoto, and Osaka. A noted actor of the time, Sawamura Sojuro, made a great hit with one of these plays in Osaka in 1746 and in Kyoto in the following year; and a famous writer of puppet-plays named Takeda Izumo, who saw these successes of Sojuro, produced in collaboration with Namiki Senryu and Miyoshi Shoraku in 1748 the play, *Kanadehon-Chushingura*, which is translated in the following pages. It was put up, as originally intended, at a puppet theatre and afterward at an ordinary theatre. It became not only the most celebrated version of the vendetta, but also the most popular of all plays; and other plays upon the subject of the loyal retainers of Ako were entirely dropped. So great is even at the present time the fame of the play that the revenge of Ako retainers is better known as *Chushingura* and its hero Oishi Kuranosuke sounds less familiar to the ears of the common people than his play-name of Oboshi Yuranosuke. For the latter name which first appeared in Chikamatsu's *Goban-Taiheiki* is adopted in the *Chushingura*, as also the names of Enya Hangwan, Kono Moronao, and Teraoka Heiyemon. The play still retains its popularity and it is even now, as it used formerly to be, in many theatres the stock play for the last month of the year since it is sure to draw large houses, just as the plays founded on the vendetta of the Soga brothers are the most commonly performed in the first month.

We will now proceed to discuss the plot of the play and compare it with the true story of the famous vendetta.

THE ATTACK IN THE PALACE.

It was the established custom under the Tokugawa rule for the feudal government to offer to the Imperial Court a large sum of money and other articles as presents when a messenger was sent there to tender the New Year's greetings in the first month of every year; and the Imperial Court, too, despatched envoys to Yedo to inquire after the Shogun's health. On such occasion the Shogun's government specially appointed from among the *daimyo* officers to attend upon the Imperial envoys. On the day on which the Shogun received the envoys took place a great ceremony at which the Shogun himself received the Imperial message direct from the envoys; on the following day a performance of *No* was given in their honour, after which a grand banquet was held. On the third day the Shogun himself presented his reply to the Imperial message. Throughout these ceremonies the *daimyo* immediately connected with the Shogun and others then staying in the city presented themselves at the Palace in full Court dress.

In the second month of the fourteenth year of Genroku (1701), when it was announced that the envoys of the Emperor Higashiyama and the Ex-Emperor Reigen were coming to Yedo, Asano Takumi-no-Kami Naganori, Lord of Ako, in the province of Harima, and Date Sakyo-no-suke Muneharu, Lord of Yoshida, in the province of Iyo, were appointed officers to entertain the envoys, and the *Kōke*,* Kira Kozuke-no-Suke Yoshinaka and Otomo Omi-no-Kami Yoshitaka, were ordered to receive them. At first Takumi-no-Kami declined the appointment, for though it was a great honour to him and his family, he was, he pleaded, unused to Court etiquette; but one of

*A high officer versed in Court etiquette. The office was hereditary.

the Court Councillors replied that there was not one *daimyo* who was used to such office, but as Kira Kozuke-no-Suke was well versed in these matters from having for many years taken part in the reception of the envoys, he could perform his duties by consulting him. And Takumi-no-Kami was obliged to accept the appointment.

Date Sakyo-no-Suke being still young, his councillors managed all his affairs; and knowing Kozuke-no-Suke's character, they made him valuable presents when they asked him to instruct their lord in the ceremonies which he was to attend. Takumi-no-Kami's councillors on duty in Yedo were Yasui Hikozaemon and Fujii Matazaemon; and though he told them to send presents to Kozuke-no-Suke, they, being unused to the world's ways, made presents which were far smaller than Date's and thereby aroused Kozuke-no-Suke's anger. Kozuke-no-Suke then determined, when Takumi-no-Kami asked for instruction, to make him commit blunders and fall into disgrace. On the 11th day of the third month (April 6th, 1701), the Imperial envoys arrived in Yedo; and on the following day they proceeded to the Shogun's castle and presented the Imperial messages; and on the 14th they were entertained at a banquet. All these ceremonies were concluded without a hitch. The 15th was the day on which the Shogun was to present a reply to the Imperial messages. Early in the morning, the Shogun's near relatives and other *daimyo* and lower lords were awaiting the arrival of the envoys in the Pine Corridor (so called from pictures of pine-trees on the doors), when Kozuke-no-Suke began to abuse Takumi-no-Kami for his ignorance of Court etiquette. The latter, who had hitherto borne his insults in silence, now lost his temper and struck the other's forehead with his sword. As Kozuke-no-Suke sank on the floor, he cut at him on the shoulder. As Kozuke-no-Suke then rose and fled stumbling, his enemy pursued him, but was prevented

from striking him again by being caught from behind by Kajikawa Yosobei, an attendant of the Shogun's mother. Kozuke-no-Suke's wounds were slight and were immediately attended to by Court physicians. The Shogun, who had intended to show every respect to the envoys, was highly incensed when he heard of this attack and ordered an inquiry to be made into the matter. He appointed on the spot a *daimyo* to take Takumi-no-Kami's place, and concluded without further accident the ceremony of presenting a reply to the Imperial messages. When the inquiry was held, Kozuke-no-Suke averred that he had given no cause for the attack, which Takumi-no-Kami had made in a fit of insanity, while Takumi-no-Kami asserted that Kozuke-no-Suke's frequent insults were such that he could no longer bear them in silence and so had drawn his sword.

The above incidents afford the material for the attack scene in the third act of the *Chushingura*, and are the true cause of the vendetta of the Ako retainers. The story of Moronao's love for Kaoyo is taken from the twenty-first book of the *Taiheiki*, which gives a romantic history of the wars and other events during fifty years from 1318 to 1367. The names of Kono Moronao and Enya Hangwan, which were first used by Chikamatsu in his play, were taken from that book. The story told in that work is briefly as follows:—The daughter of Prince Takeda, a connection by marriage of the Emperor Godaigo, was considered one of the most beautiful women of her time. She was given in marriage to Enya Hangwan Takasada in the province of Izumo; but Kono Musashi-no-Kami Moronao was also deeply in love with her. He made love to her, but was rejected. Piqued at her refusal, he pretended to the Shogun that Enya was plotting against him. The Shogun believed his

words, and Enya was compelled to fly for his life to his province. He revolted in self-defence, but was attacked by the Shogun's forces, and finally put an end to himself.

The first act of the play treats only of the collision between Moronao and Wakasanosuke ; it is merely a by-play to prepare the spectator for an exhibition of the respective characters of Moronao, Enya, and Wakasanosuke.

The second act presents Honzo in his lord's house and makes Wakasanosuke an indirect cause of Enya's ruin. As Wakasanosuke corresponds to Sakyo-no-Suke, Honzo is made to act as the latter's councillors did and offer valuable presents to Moronao. And to economise the characters of the play, Honzo takes Kajikawa Yosobei's place and stops Enya when he pursues Moronao, and his daughter Konami is promised in marriage to Oboshi's son Rikiya, all which leads to the tragedy in the ninth act.

TAKUMI-NO-KAMI'S DEATH.

Takumi-no-Kami had caused a disturbance in the Palace by giving vent to private resentment although he was on duty as officer for the entertainment of the Imperial envoys, and thereby shown great disrespect to the Imperial House ; and on those grounds he was given in charge to Tamura Sakyo-dayu, Lord of Ichinoseki, in Mutsu, and ordered to commit *seppuku* on the same day. The inspectors and others to be present at the self-immolation were appointed on the spot. At Lord Tamura's mansion, mattings were spread on the ground in front of a small reception-room, and upon them were laid mats, which were then covered with a rug, and curtains were hung all around. Takumi-no-Kami's head-page, Kataoka Gengemon, who had attended his lord to the Palace and wait-

ed for his return at the gate, ran back immediately to his lord's mansion when he heard of the attack in the Palace; and after reporting it there, he went to Lord Tamura's mansion and was permitted to be present at his lord's death. Takumi-no-Kami composed an ode which ran:—

“Frailer far than the tender flowers
That are soon scattered by the wind,
Must I now bid a last farewell
And leave the genial spring behind?”

And calmly he put an end to himself. He was in his thirty-fifth year.

In the scene of Hangwan's death in the fourth act of the *Chushingura*, Hangwan is made to wait impatiently for Oboshi's arrival and to see him when he had just thrust the dirk into his body; but as a matter of fact, Yuranosuke and his son were at the time at Ako, in the province of Harima. The lamentations of Kaoyo in the same scene are equally fictitious. For Takumi-no-Kami's wife was in his mansion at Teppozu near the River Sumida, and upon hearing of his death, she shaved her head at once and became a nun under the name of Yosen-in, and spent the rest of her life in prayers for her husband. The mansion in Yedo was confiscated.

Takumi-no-Kami's domain was also to be forfeited. When his death became known at Ako on the nineteenth of the third month, that is, four days after the attack, Oishi Kuranosuke, who was in charge of the castle, convoked a meeting of all the retainers of Ako and informed them of the whole affair. From sympathy for his lord's feelings at the time of his death, he said to them that as it was the loyal subject's duty to die if disgrace fell upon his lord, they must discuss how they should put an end to themselves. Some of the loyal retainers exclaimed with indignation that they should proceed at once to Yedo

and cut off Kozuke-no-Suke's head to appease their lord's angry spirit, while others as firmly urged that they should not surrender the castle, but hold it to the last against the government officers until they were killed to a man. After heated discussion, it was finally decided to surrender the castle. And when, on the eighteenth of the following month, the officers came to take possession of it, the retainers remained quiet, and after putting their account-books in order and making an inventory, they formally made over the castle to the officers on the nineteenth in the grand hall of the castle. The retainers then all dispersed and became *ronin*.

It will be seen that the incidents in the fourth act of the play have no foundation in fact beyond the suicide of Takumi-no-Kami. It is only important as introducing Yuranosuke, the hero of the play, and showing the great confidence placed in him by both his lord and his fellow-retainers.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE REVENGE.

Thus, the retainers of the clan lost their stipends upon the ruin of their lord's house and became *ronin*. Oishi Kuranosuke began to make preparations for the revenge, and at the same time made every effort to bring about the restoration of his lord's house. When he found all his efforts were unavailing and the Government refused to restore the forfeited domain and title to Takumi-no-Kami's younger brother, he decided definitely to take revenge upon Kozuke-no-Suke. Such of the late retainers as were filled with great loyalty gradually formed a league; and Kira Kozuke-no-Suke, too, took strict measures to provide against sudden attacks and sent spies and detectives to watch the movements of the loyal retainers. The retainers, also, underwent untold hardships in their efforts to inform themselves of their enemy's condition. Many

of them separated from their families and engaged themselves to tradesmen or became artisans, and so disguising themselves, obtained entry into Kira's mansion. In the meantime, several of the retainers lukewarm in their loyalty left the league one by one until the forty-seven men of matchless fidelity were left behind to carry out their plot amid almost insuperable difficulties.

Oishi placed under the care of his maternal uncle, Ishizuka, at Toyooka, in Tajima Province, his wife and four children, the eldest of whom was Matsunojo, afterwards known as Chikara Yoshikane (called Rikiya in the play), then in his fourteenth year. For a while he lay concealed in a neighbouring village; but towards the close of the sixth month, he left his native province and arrived in the following month at Yamashina, a village lying east of Kyoto, to which he brought his wife and children, and made it look as if he intended to settle permanently in that place. He received offers to take him into service from great *daimyo* like Nabeshima of Hizen and Hosokawa of Higo, and from other lords; but he declined them, one and all. And to show that he had no intention of re-entering service, he purchased a house and land at Yamashina, and brought carpenters and plasterers from Kyoto to build a retreat within the grounds, while he himself took pleasure in rearing tree-peonies in his garden. It looked quite as if he would in course of time make over the headship of the house to his son Matsunojo and retire into his retreat, there to pass the remainder of his life in admiring the beauties of nature. He was all the while waiting for the opportunity to carry out his plot.

Meanwhile, Kira still kept strict guard. No one was taken into service in his mansion without careful inquiry into his antecedents; and from retainers and sandal-carriers even to common servants, no one but a native of Kira's domain was engaged except in unavoidable cases.

Tradesmen were strictly forbidden to enter the premises and the gate-keepers were required to examine carefully all who came to the mansion. And at the same time Oishi's movements at Yamashina were carefully watched.

Now, Oishi determined to throw the enemy completely off the scent by leading a dissolute life and pretending that he had given up the revenge in despair. He took to pleasures against his inclination; he became a noted profligate. He frequented the pleasures-quarters of Kyoto and Fushimi and then, those of Osaka. *Ronin* as he was, he had been the chief retainer of Ako; and he seemed to have inexhaustible supply of money, which he spent with lavish liberality and became notorious for his dissipation in Kyoto and elsewhere. His confederates, too, decided to show to the world how dissolute they had grown in their despair, and vied with their chief in profligacy. And while these loyal retainers pretended to the world that they had given themselves up utterly to debauchery, their leaders held consultations in these pleasure-quarters and matured their plan amid the revelry of their comrades.

The dissolute life, which Oishi was now leading, exposed him to the abuse of the world, which condemned him for apparently sinking into dissipation, forgetful of his lord's death. Next, Oishi sent away his family with whom he had lived in great affection. He did this, partly to show that he had no thought beyond his pleasures and partly to prepare for the revenge. According to the law in those days, for a serious crime not only the offender himself, but also his family, were punished; and he feared that his wife and children might suffer from his act. He, therefore, divorced his wife, who went away with their three youngest children. He became more dissolute than ever. He brought to his house a woman named Okaru, who was noted throughout Kyoto for her beauty and made her his mistress. Kira's spies grew

weary of watching him and became less vigilant. Meanwhile, the retainers' plan matured, and finally Oishi left Yamashina in the tenth month for Yedo, where he arrived early in the following month.

The above furnishes the material for the seventh and ninth acts of the play. Oishi's mistress, Okaru, appears in the play as Hayano Kanpei's wife and Teraoka Heiyemon's sister, and so connects her story with the death of Kanpei in the sixth act and with the night-attack in the eleventh. It makes her of more interest than if she only remained a mistress whom Oishi brought home to conceal his true designs. The seventh act also reveals Oishi as a man of great loyalty, who conceals his plot under cover of dissipation. It is an act which shows him in his true character and one that calls for fine acting on the part of the player who assumes the rôle of the hero.

THE SUICIDE OF SANPEI.

All the loyal retainers, after their great hardships and perseverance, succeeded in carrying out their object at last; but there was one who died before the revenge was taken. His name was Kayano Sanpei Shigezane, who appears in the play as Hayano Kanpei. He was the second son of Kayano Shigetoshi, a retainer of Oshima Dewa-no-Kami; and when he was twelve years old, he was, at Dewa-no-Kami's recommendation, taken into Takumi-no-Kami's service as page. When Takumi-no-Kami was condemned to death for the attack in the Palace, Sanpei was in the mansion in Yedo; and immediately the sentence was passed, he left with another retainer for Ako, where he arrived in four days and a half and reported to Oishi. After the surrender of the castle and dispersal of the retainers, Sanpei returned to

his native village to mourn for his mother who had lately died. As his village was only about thirty miles from Yamashina, he went often to see Oishi and consulted him on the revenge. In the following winter, he asked his father's permission to proceed to Yedo and seek a new situation; but his father refused as he was sure, he said, that Sanpei was going to take revenge upon his lord's enemy, and added that such an act on Sanpei's part might implicate not only his own family, but even bring trouble upon Oshima Dewa-no-Kami, which he could not allow as he was no less loyal to his lord than Sanpei was to his. Then, Sanpei asked him to sever their relation of father and son; but this also his father refused, saying that nothing worthy could be done by one who cut off natural ties. Sanpei could do nothing; and seeing that he could not revenge his lord's death, he resolved to die and apologise to his lord in the other world. On the fourteenth of the first month in the following year, he sent a letter to Oishi and before daybreak next day, he killed himself while the family were asleep. His father, fearing that the Ako retainers' plot would be discovered if his son's death became known, had his body secretly buried in a neighbouring hill. Sanpei was twenty-six years old at the time of his death. He was perhaps over-hasty in rushing to his death; but the principles of Bushido left him no choice; a man of knightly spirit could do nothing but die under the circumstances.

In their eagerness to enlist the sympathy of their audience, the authors of the play have brought love-interest into his story and weakened his character by attributing to him an act of disloyalty. Still, his failure in duty in the third act for the love of a woman was necessary for showing his deep repentance in the fifth act and its incidental consequences, the sale of his wife and his tragic end in the sixth,

which lend peculiar pathos to Okaru's story in the seventh act.

AMANOYA RIHEI.

Amanoya Rihei was a merchant of Osaka, whose family had for generations enjoyed the patronage of the lord of Ako. When the loyal retainers held council after their lord's death, Rihei hied to Ako to offer his services. And when they had formed the plan for the revenge, they kept it strictly secret from all except Rihei; and later, Oishi secretly asked Rihei to procure all the weapons and other implements that were needed for the night-attack. The retainers lay concealed in Kyoto, Osaka, and Yedo; and Rihei in Osaka, went himself, without the knowledge of his family and servants, to different shops and works to have the necessary weapons made, and as soon as they were ready, he forwarded them to Yedo. One of the smiths reported to the authorities that he had received an order for a special description of weapons; and Rihei was soon after arrested and examined. Rihei replied that the weapons of the special make had been invented by a certain samurai; and other smiths, upon hearing of Rihei's arrest, also reported that they had received orders from him. Rihei was, then, put to the torture; but still he would not tell the truth. His wife and children were also tortured; but they all answered that they knew nothing. Rihei told the prison officers that his family knew nothing of his purchases and begged them to torture him instead of his family. He was then put to such tortures that he was more than once on the point of death. He told the officers that he had from the first been prepared for death when he entered upon the undertaking, but that when the new year came, he would confess all or submit to any punishment they might inflict. He spoke with such composure that they took his word and refrained from

further tortures. When the new year came, the revenge of the Ako retainers was everywhere talked of; and when Rihei heard of it in prison, he went up to the officers and confessed that as his family had for generations enjoyed the patronage of the lord of Ako, he had been asked by Oishi to procure the weapons for their night-attack upon Kira's mansion, and it was for that revenge that he had ordered the smiths to make weapons for him, and now that the revenge had been successfully carried out, the time had come for him to receive his just punishment; and he added that from fear of the plot being discovered and of the punishment for his offence being extended to innocent persons, he had concealed it from his family, and he therefore begged that his family might be spared while he himself would willingly submit to the severest punishment. The officers were greatly struck by his manly spirit and released him. They restored to his son Rihei's property which they had confiscated and made him follow his father's trade. Rihei himself renounced the world and peacefully ended his days in a temple closely connected with the Asano family.

All the other incidents of the play, such as the story of Kanpei and Okaru, the marriage of Konami and Rikiya, and the death of Honzo, are more or less connected with the main plot of the play; but the story of Amanoya Rihei, who appears in the play under the name of Amakawayaya Gihei, is the least connected. The tenth act was written to exhibit the manly spirit of a merchant and to show that even among the mercantile class were men who could help the retainers in their great undertaking. Amanoya Rihei was, in fact, a fine example of the *otokodate*, to whom reference has been made in a former page, and his character, as it appears in the play, has been the boast of his class. It is a vindica-

tion of the commoners by writers who belonged to that class.

THE REVENGE.

The loyal retainers willingly submitted to every hardship and privation in their efforts to carry out their long-cherished plan of revenge. The league which was originally composed of more than a hundred persons, gradually dwindled by defection to less than half the number, and made more onerous the labours of the loyal men. Some of them became doctors, others taught fencing and similar arts, and others again turned rice-dealers and merchants; but they devoted all their energies, so far as they could do so without arousing suspicion, to watching the enemy's movements and keeping in communication with one another. The labour and trouble they took to obtain information regarding the interior of Kira's mansion was such as would hardly be believed in these days. One of them who was versed in the art of tea-making, obtained news from time to time of the goings-on in the enemy's mansion from a professor of that art who was patronised by Kira. He ascertained from him that there was to be a tea-party at the mansion on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the fifteenth year of Genroku (which corresponded to the 20th January, 1703). On that night, then, their enemy was sure to be at home; and the retainers decided to make their long-planned scheme early the following morning. From about two o'clock they began to gather at their trysting-place; and at about four o'clock they all arrived in the snow under a clear moonlight in front of Kira's mansion. Here they divided into two companies; one under Oishi made for the front gate and the other under Yoshida Chuzaemon for the back gate on the west side. They entered the mansion and making the capture of their enemy Kira

their sole object, they only cut down those who offered resistance. They searched the whole mansion for him, but apparently without success. They feared that he had escaped them; but one of them, hearing a man's voice in a shed near the kitchen, went in and dragged him out and found he was the enemy they had undergone so many hardships to seize. They cut off his head. Then, they marched out in order without losing a single man. It was about six o'clock, so that the fight had lasted two hours.

The eleventh act merely serves to bring the story to a conclusion. The true climax would have been the suicide of the loyal retainers; but it was doubtless felt by the authors that they would give the greatest satisfaction to the sympathetic audience by ending the play when the loyal men were at the height of their joy after accomplishing their long-cherished object.

THE CONCLUSION.

Although the story of the famous vendetta in the play concludes with the departure of the retainers from the mansion with their enemy's head, we may, to complete the story, here give a brief account of the subsequent events.

The loyal retainers of Ako marched in order through the city and arrived at the temple of Sengakuji, their lord's burial-place, in the south of Yedo. There they washed Kira's bloody head and placing it in front of their lord's grave, reported as to a living person all the circumstances of the revenge. Oishi sent two of his men to the Chief Censor, Sengoku Hoki-no-Kami, to report their late attack, while a similar report was made by the superior of the temple to Abe Hida-no-Kami, the Commissioner of Temples and Shrines; and both these officers went to the

Shogun's palace to report the matter. Officers were then sent to inspect Kira's mansion to verify the report. Universal sympathy was expressed for the retainers; and pending the decision of their case, they were given in charge, seventeen to Hosokawa Etchu-no-Kami, Lord of Higo, ten each to Mori Kai-no-Kami, Lord of Chofu and Hisamatsu Oki-no-Kami, Lord of Matsuyama, and nine to Mizuno Kenmotsu, Lord of Okazaki. All these *daimyo* received them into their mansions with willingness and treated them with great consideration. It will be seen that the number of retainers taken charge of by these *daimyo* was forty-six, because one of them, Terasaka Kichiemon, the Teraoka Heiyemon of the play, was sent immediately after the attack to report to Takumino-Kami's widow, and his name did not appear in the report made by Oishi to the Chief Censor.

The fate of the brave retainers became the burning question of the day. Opinion was divided among the scholars and government officials on the way they should be treated. Some were for pardoning them as vendetta was permitted by the state, while others advocated that as they had broken the law of the land from private motives, they should be condemned to death and that an order to commit suicide would show that their great loyalty was duly appreciated since they were not to be beheaded like common criminals. Finally, on the fourth of the second month of the following year (10th March, 1703), they committed *seppuku* by order in the mansions of the respective *daimyo* who had them in charge, and were buried at Sengakuji beside the tomb of their lord whom they had served so well.

ACT I.

GHUSHINGURA

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ACT I.

RECITATIVE.

Though there may be delicate food, we cannot relish it unless we taste it, and so, when peace has been restored, the loyalty and valour of gallant warriors remain unrevealed, like the stars which are hidden from view by day, but appear at night scattered through the heavens. And here is an instance in point.

Now peace reigns over the land. It is the latter part of the second month of the first year of the Era Ryaku-o.* The Lord Shogun Ashikaga Takauji† has overthrown Nitta Yoshi-

* The first year corresponds roughly to 1338.

† The first Shogun of the Ashikaga line, which lasted from 1338 to 1573. Born in 1305 and died in 1358.

sada* and has built a palace in Kyoto. His virtuous rule has spread in all directions and the whole nation bows before his might as



the grass before the wind. In the glory of his power, he has raised a Shrine to Hachiman *(the God of War)* at Tsurugaoka, which being completed, his younger brother, Lord Ashikaga Sahyoc-no-Kami Tadayoshi, has arrived at Kamakura as his deputy to celebrate its opening. Kono Musashi-no-Kami Moronao, Governor of Kamakura, haughty and overweening, and the officers appointed to receive the noble

* A celebrated loyalist, born in 1301 and died in the Battle of Fujishima in 1338.

guest, Wakasanosuke Yasuchika, the younger brother of Momonoi Harima-no-Kami, and Enya Hangwan Takasada, Lord of Hakushu, they all sit in state in the curtained front of the Shrine.

YOSHITADA. How now, Moronao? In this box is laid the helmet bestowed by the Emperor Godaigo* upon Nitta Yoshisada, who was lately overthrown by my brother Takauji. Enemy as he was, still Yoshisada was a lineal descendant of the Seiwa Genji†; and the helmet, though it was thrown away, cannot be left unheeded. And my brother commands us to place it in the treasure-house of this Shrine.

MORONAO. I am surprised at my lord's words. If we must respect Nitta's helmet because he was a descendant of the Emperor Seiwa, there are many *daimyo* and *shomyo*‡

* Emperor Godaigo reigned from 1319 to 1338.

† Seiwa Genji: the name Minamoto, or Genji, was first bestowed upon Prince Tsunemoto, a grandson of Emperor Seiwa (856-877), when he suppressed Masakado's rebellion in 940. The Seiwa Genji were the direct descendants of the prince, while the collateral lines were known as the Yamato, Settsu, and Kai Genji.

‡ *Daimyo*, or great names, were the great territorial lords; and *Shomyo*, or small names, were those immediately below them in rank.

under my lord's standard who are of the Seiwa Genji line. I think it not well to treasure the helmet.

WAKASANOSUKE. Nay, I do not agree with you. It seems to me that this is a stratagem of my Lord Takauji to strike those adherents of Nitta who have escaped death with admiration at His Highness's benevolent virtue and make them surrender of their own accord. You are overhasty in opposing it.

MORONAO. You are presumptuous to call me overhasty. When Yoshisada died in battle, forty-seven helmets lay scattered around his corse. We do not know which of them was his; and if we treasure what we believe to have been his and afterwards find that it was the wrong one, great will be our shame. We have no need for the opinion of a stripling like you; keep your distance.

RECITATIVE. Secure in his lord's favour, he speaks with arrogance, and Wakasanosuke glares at him with angry eyes. Enya sees his look.

HANGWAN. Though there is truth in my Lord Moronao's words, still what Lord Momonoi says is a stratagem which we should employ

in time of peace. We submit, then, to the wise decision of my Lord Tadayoshi, who is great both in war and peace.

RECITATIVE. Tadayoshi looks pleased.

TADAYOSHI. As I thought you would say so, I have summoned for the purpose Enya's wife. Call her forth.

RECITATIVE. Soon after the order is given, appears Kaoyo, the wife of Lord Enya, bare-footed on the sand of the approach to the Shrine; the skirt of her over-dress sweeps the ground like the sacred broom of the Shrine; lightly powdered and beautiful as a jewel, she bows to the ground at a distance. Moronao, a lover of women, calls out to her.

MORONAO. My Lord Enya's consort, Lady Kaoyo, you must be fatigued with waiting so long. His Highness has summoned you; pray, come nearer.

TADAYOSHI. I have summoned you for this. As the Emperor Godaigo bestowed on Yoshisada the helmet His Majesty wore in the capital during the war of the Genko Era*, we have

* In this era (1331-3), the Emperor made war upon Hojo Takatoki, the last of the Kamakura Regents, who defeated and exiled him to the Island of Oki.

no doubt that Nitta donned it in his last hour. But no one here can identify it. You, I have heard, were at the time one of the twelve maids of honour and were in charge of the armoury. You, surely, must know the helmet; and if you remember it, come, identify it.

RECITATIVE. To a woman he gives his order gently; and softly she answers.

KAoyo. Gracious is my lord's command. His Majesty's helmet have I held in my hands many a night and morning. It was bestowed upon Yoshisada, together with a rare incense called *Ranjatai*. It was I, Kaoyo, who handed it to him. Upon receiving the gift, he said, "Man lives for only one generation, but his name endures for ever. When I go forth to die in battle, I will, before I put on the helmet, burn all this incense in its inside so that it may leave its perfume on my hair. If, then, Your Majesty hears that the enemy has taken a rare-scented head, know that Yoshisada has fought his last." And I do not think he has belied his word.

RECITATIVE. Hanging upon her words,

Moronao who has designs upon her, listens-with dilated nostrils.

TADAYOSHI. Clear indeed is Kaoyo's answer. As I thought such would be the case, I have had the forty-seven helmets that lay scattered put in this box. Now examine them.

RECITATIVE. At these words the attendants bend their hips and unlock the box. Impatient to see the helmets, Kaoyo approaches boldly and without fear. She sees many a noted Kamakura helmet of divers shapes. The helmet-signs differ with the fashion of the

families. Some are plain, and others are without camail for ease in bending the bow. Among these many which vary with the tastes of their wearers appears at last a five-plated helmet with a dragon-head. Before Kaoyo can say that this is the one they seek,



the scent of the rare incense pervades all around.

KAOYO. This is Yoshisada's helmet which I have often held in my hands.

RECITATIVE. She brings it forward, and her word is taken.

TADAYOSHI. Let Enya and Momonoi place it in the treasure-house. Come this way.

RECITATIVE. He rises, and dismissing Kaoyo, passes by the steps. Enya and Momonoi follow within. Instantly Kaoyo, also, prepares to go.

KAOYO. Lord Moronao, you will remain a little longer, and when your arduous duties are over, you will go home; but I, who have been dismissed, must not stay longer. I take my leave.

RECITATIVE. But as she rises, Moronao approaches and holds her by the sleeve.

MORONAO. Nay, wait; I pray you, wait. I meant, as soon as my duties are over to-day, to call at your house, for I have something to show you. But Lord Tadayoshi who happily summoned you here to-day, is as a god who has brought us together. As you

know, I take pleasure in composing poetry, and have asked Yoshida no Kenko* to be my teacher. We exchange letters daily. Here is a letter which I was going to ask him to send to you ; I would gladly hear your answer from your lips.

RECITATIVE. He slips from his sleeve to hers a letter tied in a knot. She starts when she sees it is a love-letter which is out of keeping with his aged face. But if she openly puts him to shame, her husband's name will become common talk. Shall she take it home and show it to her husband? No, no ; if Lord Enya feels resentment, a quarrel or other evil consequences may follow. So, without a word, she drops the letter on the ground. Loth to let it be seen by others, Moronao takes it up.

MORONAO.

“ Since her dear hand has touched it,

I cannot leave alone

This note she has rejected,

E'en though it is mine own.”

Until you give me a definite answer and a

* One of the most noted poets of his day (1282-1350).

favourable, I will never cease to press my suit. Here am I, Moronao, in whose power it is to make the whole country rise or fall; and whether I kill Enya or let him live, it depends only upon Kaoyo's will. Am I not right?

RECITATIVE. Kaoyo can answer with naught but tears. At this moment Wakasanosuke chances to enter, and perceives at once that Moronao is, as is his wont, behaving outrageously.

WAKASANOSUKE. Lady Kaoyo, are you not yet gone? By remaining after you have been dismissed, you are disobeying His Highness. You had better go home at once.

RECITATIVE. When she is thus urged to go home, Moronao sees that Wakasanosuke has guessed what he has been doing; still, he shows a brazen front and answers back.

MORONAO. You are again presumptuous. When she may go, I will tell her so myself. Kaoyo, Enya's wife, has besought me to see that her husband performs his duties without any mishap. That is as it should be. Even a *daimyo's* wife acts thus. You, of low position as you are, to whom do you owe

your pittance of a stipend? So precarious is your fortune that a word of mine could reduce you to beggary. And still do you call yourself a samurai?



RECITATIVE. He abuses him in revenge for his interference. Bursting with anger, Wakasanosuke grasps the hilt of his sword with such fierce force as threatens to crush it; but he recollects that he is in front of the Shrine and in His Highness's train, and he restrains himself; and yet, one word more, and he will cut him down. Attendants enter announcing His Highness's return and clear the way. He is compelled to forgo his revenge for the moment; but he is bursting with indignation. Lucky

in his evil course, Moronao escapes death ; and Enya, who little dreams that he will be his enemy on the morrow, brings up the rear of the procession. Lord Tadayoshi walks with quiet dignity ; and his stately bearing is like the dragon frontlet of the helmet which has been placed in the treasure-house of the Shrine.



ACT II.

ACT II.

RECITATIVE.

It is an evening in the month of growing plants.* They are sweeping the grounds in the mansion of Momonoi Wakasanosuke Yasuchika. The Councillor, Kakogawa Honzo Yukikuni, who, in the mature manhood of fifty years, guards the mansion as the aged pine overlooks the garden, comes along outside the reception-room in formal dress. The servants on the ground, unaware of his presence, talk on.

FIRST SERVANT. Why, Bekunai, our lord has for the last few days been making great preparations. The guest from the Capital visited the Shrine of Hachiman at Tsurugaoka yesterday. That meant tremendous expenses. Ah, I wish I had that lot of money; for if I

* Refers to the third month of the lunar year, which corresponds roughly to April.

had it, I would change my name Bekusuke* and enjoy myself.



SECOND SERVANT. What, change your name and enjoy yourself? that is strange! And what would you change it to?

FIRST SERVANT. Why, I would change it to Kakusuke and have a fling.

SECOND SERVANT. Oh, you fool! Don't you know? Our Lord Wakasanosuke, I hear, came to grief yesterday at Tsurugaoka. I don't know the particulars; but it was talked

* A common servant's name, which the man wishes to change for a better-sounding one.

about in the servants' room that Lord Moronao put him to great shame. I suppose he said something unreasonable and humiliated our lord.

HONZO. Hi, what are you chattering so noisily about? You are talking of our lord, and that, too, when my lady is ill. If there is anything likely to bring shame upon the house, I shall not let it pass unheeded. Calamities arise from below; and servants should be discreet of tongue. When you have done sweeping, go away all of you.

RECITATIVE. He speaks to them gently. A maid-servant brings him tobacco, which he inhales and sends up rings and clouds of smoke. In the passage he hears the rustling of a dress and scents its perfume; and softly comes out Honzo's darling only daughter, Mistress Konami, with her mother Tonase.

HONZO. What, you two here? It is most unmannerly of you to be amusing yourselves, instead of waiting upon my lady.

KONAMI. Nay, father. My lady is in especially good spirits to-day and is just now fast asleep. Is it not so, mother?

TONASE. Ah, Honzo, my lady was saying something a little while ago. There appears to be a rumour that, at the time Konami went yesterday to Tsurugaoka in my lady's place, high words passed between our lord and Lord Moronao. Somehow or other, it came to my lady's ears and made her very uneasy. She asked if my husband Honzo, who must know all the particulars, meant to conceal it from her; and so I asked Konami, but she knew no more about it than I. If it is likely to aggravate her illness and bring shame upon the house.....

HONZO. Come, come, Tonami. Why did you not make up an answer? Our lord is naturally of a hasty temper; and as to high words, they are common enough among women and children. It is the duty of our swords to put an end to our lives if this little tongue of ours makes a slip of one or half a word. Are you not a samurai's wife? Could you not recollect yourself in such a trivial matter? Be more careful. But, daughter, when you went to worship in my lady's place, was there not such a rumour? Or was there? What,

there was not? I thought so. Why, it is nothing to speak of. Very well, I will go at once and see my lady and set her mind at ease.

RECITATIVE. And as he rises to go, the officer on duty enters.

OFFICER. Master Oboshi Yuranosuke's son, Master Oboshi Rikiya, has come.

HONZO. Ha, I suppose he comes as a messenger from Lord Hangwan to make arrangements for the entertainment of the guests. Show him in. Receive the message, Tonase, and deliver it to our lord. The messenger is Rikiya, our daughter Konami's betrothed husband. Entertain him. I will see my lady.

RECITATIVE. With these words he goes in; and Tonami comes close to her daughter.

TONASE. Dear Konami, your father is always stiff-mannered; but I thought he would tell you to receive the message. Instead of that, he says I am to receive it; in that he is of quite a different mind from me. You would like, I am sure, to see Rikiya and speak to him. Go and meet him in my place. What do you say, eh?

RECITATION. Her mother repeats her question ; but her only answer is the maiden blush that suffuses her face, and her mother surmises its meaning.

TONASE. Oh, how it hurts ! My daughter, please, rub down my back.

RECITATION. Konami is bewildered and assists her.

TONASE. Well, you see, my anxiety since the morning has brought on my old complaint. I do not think I can in this state meet the messenger. Oh, how it pains me ! I am sorry to trouble you ; but you will hear the message and entertain the messenger. There is no getting round our lord and ailments.

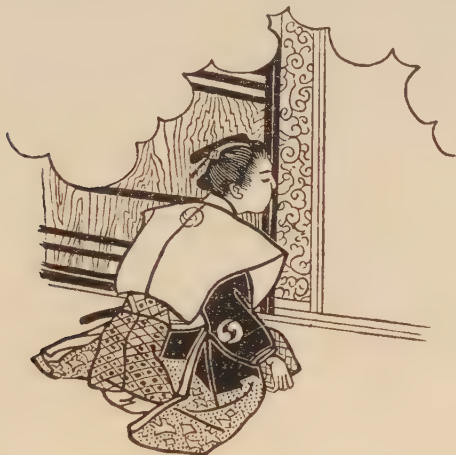
RECITATIVE. She slowly gets up.

TONASE. Receive him well, daughter, but not too well, for fear you should forget the important message. I should like to see my future son-in-law ; but.....

RECITATIVE. But the lady, knowing her daughter's feeling, goes within. Konami bows to her with gratitude.

KONAMI. How grateful I am, mother ! How I have longed to see my betrothed !

RECITATIVE. But when she sees him, what shall she say? And her maiden heart palpi-



tates with joy and expectation. Presently enters Oboshi Rikiya. Even in walking on the mat, he observes the etiquette. He is yet in his seventeenth year; his forelock stands erect; with his family crest of double-*tomoe* and his two swords, he looks fine and dignified. In his appearance he is worthy of his father Oboshi Yuranosuke. He sits down quietly.

RIKIYA. I beg to deliver my message.

RECITATIVE. He speaks with courtesy; and Konami suddenly lays her hands on the mat before her. They look at each other;

each loves the other, but remains speechless. Their blushing faces are as one the plum-blossom and the other the cherry-flower. At last, Konami recollects herself.

KONAMI. Ah, you are welcome. I am ordered to hear your message; and will you give it to me direct from your lips to mine?

RECITATIVE. And she approaches him, but he turns aside.

RIKIYA. Nay, that would be discourteous. In delivering and receiving messages, etiquette is always of the first importance.

RECITATIVE. He shuffles backward and lays his hands before him on the mat.

RIKIYA. This is the message my master Enya Hangwan presents to Lord Wakasanosuke: "As we are to attend at the Palace of the Governor-General Lord Tadayoshi before daybreak to-morrow, it is believed that the guests also will arrive early. Lord Moronao has therefore ordered that Hangwan and Wakasanosuke should present themselves at the Palace without fail at the seventh hour*. And to

*About four o'clock.

provide against all chance of a mistake arising, my master Hangwan has sent me with the message. You will please, then, report to this effect to my Lord Wakasanosuke."

RECITATIVE. His words flow so smoothly that Konami gazes at his face in fascination and gives no answer.

WAKASANOSUKE. I have heard your message; and I am obliged to you.

RECITATIVE. And with these words Wakasanosuke comes in.

WAKASANOSUKE. Since we parted yesterday, I have not been able to see Lord Hangwan. Yes, I will present myself punctually at the seventh hour. I thank Lord Hangwan for his message; and please present to him my compliments. I am also obliged to you.

RIKIYA. Then I will take my leave, my lord. I am grateful to you, lady, for receiving my message.

RECITATIVE. He stands up quietly, and without once looking back, adjusts his dress, and goes away. Immediately Honzo comes in from another room.

HONZO. Ha, are you here, my lord? I hear you must be present at the seventh hour to-morrow morning. It is close upon the ninth hour*, and I beg you will take a rest.

WAKASANOSUKE. Yes, yes. But Honzo, I have some thing to say to you in private. Send away Konami.

HONZO. Ah, daughter, we will clap our hands when we want you. And so go in.

RECITATIVE. He sends away his daughter. And wondering at his lord's strange look, he comes close to him.

HONZO. I have been wanting to ask you, my lord, for some time; now I beg you to tell me all.

RECITATIVE. As he comes still closer, his lord also shuffles towards him.

WAKASANOSUKE. Honzo, now let me hear your solemn oath that you will absolutely submit to what I am going to tell you.

HONZO. Your words are indeed solemn, my lord. Well, I will submit; but.....

*Twelve o'clock.

WAKASANOSUKE. Do you say that you cannot swear the samurai's oath?

HONZO. No, I do not say so; but I will first hear you.

WAKASANOSUKE. And after hearing me, you will remonstrate, I suppose?

HONZO. No, that.....

WAKASANOSUKE. You disobey me? What do you say?

RECITATIVE. Honzo bends down his head and remains speechless for a while; but presently he comes to a determination. He draws his dirk, and then partly unsheathing his sword with the other hand, he strikes it with the dirk.*



HONZO. You see now Honzo's spirit. I will neither stop you nor divulge your secret. I beg you to say what you wish to tell me

*The samurai's manner of taking an oath.

without hurry, so that I may understand it completely.

WAKASANOSUKE. I will tell you. The Governor-General, Lord Ashikaga Sahyoe-no-Kami Tadayoshi, has come to Kamakura to celebrate the completion of the Shrine at Tsurugaoka, and Enya Hangwan and I have been appointed to entertain him. The Shogun Takauji has also ordered that, making Kono Moronao our adviser, we should act under his instruction in all things, as he is a samurai of mature age and wide experience. Inflated with the high favour he enjoys, he has become now ten times more arrogant than before. And in the presence of the samurai from the Capital, he took advantage of my youth to abuse and revile me. Often I thought to cut him in two; but as often I bethought me of the Shogun's order and restrained myself. But to-morrow I will bear it no longer; I will put him to shame in His Highness's presence and then cut him down. Be sure not to stop me. Both my wife and you have oftentimes remonstrated with me for my hasty temper; and I know

well my defect. But think of my spirit, often as I have been humiliated. I am not unmindful that my act will ruin my house and plunge my wife into deepest grief; but it is the duty of my sword which I cannot shirk without punishment from the God of War. Even if I cannot die fighting in battle, for the benefit I shall confer upon the country by slaying Moronao I will bear the shame upon my house. I tell you all this because I know the world will surely think of me as one who lost his life by his hasty temper, and as a reckless fellow readily wrought upon by passions.

RECITATIVE. He weeps with deep despair, and he is rent to his heart's core. Honzo claps his hands with admiration.

HONZO. Well done, well done. I thank you, my lord, for your words. You have borne with great patience. If I had been in your place, I should not have borne so long.

WAKASANOSUKE. What do you say, Honzo? That I have borne so long, that I have been patient? Are you jeering at me?

HONZO. I did not think to hear that

from my lord. It is a saying among townspeople that if we keep to the shade in winter and to sunshine in summer, we shall not run the risk of a quarrel or a fight in the streets; but the samurai walks straight on, and though I may be wrong, I should say that if once we gave up the road to another, there would be no end to his arrogance. I will show you that I have no intention of remonstrating with you.

RECITATIVE. He draws a dirk, and slipping a foot into a sandal, he swiftly cuts off at a stroke a branch of a pine in front of the verandah. Quickly he sheathes the blade.

HONZO. There, my lord. Cut him down as surely as I have cut this.

WAKASANOSUKE. Yes, I will; but we may be overheard.

RECITATIVE. They look around.

HONZO. It is still the ninth hour. Take a full rest; and I will set the alarm-clock. Go at once, my lord.

WAKASANOSUKE. I am pleased with the way you have listened to me. I will now go to

my wife and see her without letting her know it is my last farewell. Then I shall never see you again.

HONZO. Farewell, my lord.

RECITATIVE. With these words Wakasanosuke goes within. All-powerful is the samurai's spirit. Honzo looks at him as he goes in, and then runs to the servants' entrance, and calls out.

HONZO. Let my servants bring here my horse this minute.

RECITATIVE. Immediately the horse, bravely arrayed, is brought into the ground and Honzo leaps upon it from the verandah.

HONZO. To Moronao's mansion. Let my servants follow me.

RECITATIVE. As he rides out, Tonase and Konami rush in and catch hold of the bridle.

TONASE. Where are you going? Tell us. We heard it all. You, Honzo, old as you are, did not remonstrate with our lord. We cannot understand it and will stop you.

RECITATIVE. The mother and daughter hang on to the bridle and stop him.

HONZO. You are too meddlesome. It is because I hold precious our master's life and house that I do this. Be sure you say nothing to him; for if he hears of it from you, my daughter I will disown and Tonase I will divorce. Now, servants, I will give you orders on the road. Get out of my way, both of you.



TONASE AND KONAMI. No, no, we will not.

HONZO. How troublesome you are!

RECITATIVE. He kicks them both with his stirrups, and fainting, they fall on their backs. He does not look at them; but telling his servants to follow, he urges his horse and gallops out of sight.

ACT III.

ACT III.

RECITATIVE.

Magnificent is the Palace which Lord Ashikaga Sahyoe-no-Kami Tadayoshi has newly built upon becoming the Governor-General of the Eight Eastern Provinces ; the *daimyo* and the *shomyo* in their fine court dresses are arrayed as brightly as the stars at night on the hills of Kamakura. For the entertainment the *no*-performers* enter by the back-gate and the guests by the front. The officers for serving the banquet come to the palace at the seventh hour. Dazzling is the glory of the military families.

Now towards the West Gate, preceded by servants lighting his way with a lantern, comes Musashi-no-Kami Kono Moronao with a dignified gait. His air is haughty and overbearing ; dressed in a blue garment with

*The *No*-performance is a dramatic posture-dance accompanied by song and music.

large crests, he wears an *eboshi** which stands up as proud as himself. He has left his attendants at the offices on the way; and only a few servants walk before him. Behind him, with perked-up shoulders, struts Sagisaka Bannai, aping his master's haughty demeanour.

BANNAL. Please your lordship. You are in high favour to-day. Men like Enya and Momonoi may be proud enough at other times; but when it comes to etiquette and ceremony, they look as foolish as a puppy thrown upon a roof. Why, it makes my sides ache with laughter to see them. By the bye, I hear that Enya's wife, Lady Kaoyo, has not yet given an answer to my lord. Do not take it to heart. She is fair, but I do not fancy her. What, between a fellow like Enya and the most powerful Lord Moronao.....

MORONAO. Hush, do not talk so loud. Kaoyo remains faithful, and although I have often, on the pretence of teaching her poetry, pressed my suit, she will not consent. I hear that among her serving-women is a new maid,

*The ceremonial court hat.

Karu by name ; and I mean to coax her into taking my part. Oh, there is still hope. If Kaoyo really dislikes me, she would tell everything to Enya. But she has not, and I do not despair.

RECITATIVE. While the master and servant are nodding and talking to each other in the shadow of the four-legged gate, a samurai on guard at the gate rushes in.

SAMURAI. We were sitting on the bench at the gate when Kakogawa Honzo, a retainer of Momonoi Wakasanosuke, came and said that as he desired to see Lord Moronao personally, he had gone to his mansion on horseback ; but he found my lord had already left for the Palace. He has come with many servants and desires most earnestly to see my lord. What answer shall I give ?

BANNAI. It is presumptuous of him to desire a personal interview with Lord Moronao who is so busy to-day. I will see him.

MORONAO. Wait, wait, Bannai. I see it all. In revenge for what I did to him the day before yesterday at Tsurugaoka, Wakasanosuke has, while keeping himself in the

background, sent this fellow Honzo to humiliate me. Ha, ha, ha. Take care, Bannai. It is still before the seventh hour. Call him here. I will settle him.

BANNAI. Yes, I see. Now, servants, be prepared.

RECITATIVE. Bannai and the servants wet the rivets of their swords to prepare for a fight. At a word from Moronao, Kakogawa Honzo quietly enters. He makes his servants lay before Moronao the presents which they have brought; and retiring afar, he crouches on the ground.



HONZO. I take the liberty to address Lord Moronao. My master Wakasanosuke counts it a knightly honour beyond his desert that he should be appointed to a great office by the Shogun Takauji. We are anxious as Wakasanosuke, being still young, knows nothing of etiquette ; but since Lord Moronao has condescended to instruct and guide him in all things, he has been able to discharge his duties without mishap. This is due to no merit on the part of my master, but is entirely owing to Lord Moronao's kindness ; and it has given unspeakable joy to my master, his wife, and the whole house. If, therefore, my lord will, as a slight token of our gratitude, deign to accept a few presents from our house, we shall feel most highly honoured. Pray, present the list to my lord.

RECITATIVE. As he hands the list, Bannai takes it shyly and opens it with a perplexed look.

BANNAL. (reads). "List of presents. Thirty rolls of cloth and thirty pieces of gold, from the wife of Wakasanosuke ; twenty pieces of gold, from Kakogawa Honzo ; ten

pieces of gold, from the samurai of the house."

RECITATIVE. When Bannai has read out the list, Moronao remains open-mouthed and entranced. The two exchange glances and stare blankly around them; they look as foolish and awkward as disappointed merry-makers when the summer festivals have been postponed. Suddenly, Moronao speaks out.

MORONAO. This is really most kind of you. What had we better do, Bannai?

BANNAI. Well, if we were to decline the presents, we should be acting against their wishes, and above all, it would be a great breach of manners.

MORONAO. Ah, though I teach etiquette, I do not know what to do in a case like this. Oh, what was I going to say? Well, Master Honzo, there is nothing really to teach. Besides, Lord Wakasanosuke is so clever that I, his teacher, am left far behind. Hi, Bannai, put away the presents. It is impolite of me, but on the road I cannot even offer you a cup of tea.

RECITATIVE. Seeing this sudden change of front, Honzo feels that his plan has suc-

ceeded ; but still he keeps his hands on the ground.

HONZO. It is now the seventh hour, and I will take my leave. To-day, the most important ceremony takes place in the Palace ; and I humbly entreat my lord to honour my master with his guidance.

RECITATIVE. As he rises, Moronao holds him by the sleeve.

MORONAO. Do not go. Would you not like to see the nobles sitting round in the hall to-day ?

HONZO. But it would be most disrespectful to His Highness for one of my low rank to.....

MORONAO. No matter, no matter. When I go with you, no one shall say a word against you. Besides, Lord Wakasanosuke may also have something or other for you to do. Come, come.

HONZO. I will follow you, for it would be rude to decline. Nay, after you, my lord.

RECITATIVE. With gold he has bought his lord's life, and a crafty servant is he whose calculation has hit the mark ; but the

path of loyalty and filial duty is straight and undeviating; and straight they all go in through the gate.

Soon after, enters Enya Hangwan Takasada. He, too, has left his attendants behind and keeps his palanquin standing on the road. His retainer, Hayano Kanpei, whose family has for many generations served his house, goes up to the gate rustling in his new *hakama** figured with sere leaves. He calls out.



*A kind of divided skirts, worn by men.

KANPEI. Enya Hangwan Takasada presents himself at the Palace.

RECITATIVE. The gate-guard comes out.

GUARD. A while ago, Lord Momonoi came to the Palace and asked for my lord; and just now Lord Moronao arrived and also asked for him. They have both gone in.

ENYA. What, Kanpei, have they all gone in? I am grieved to find that I am late.

RECITATIVE. With only Kanpei in his train, he hurries into the Palace. From within the Palace is heard the song for the entertainment; it runs, "They have arrived at the coast of Harima, at the beach of Takasago." While the sound is wafted by the wind to the willow-tree outside the gate, even more shapely than the willow is the maiden of some eighteen summers, with arched eyebrows, her face covered with a hood and her *obi* tied behind, evidently serving in a strict family, who comes along attended by a servant with a lantern adorned with Enya's family crest. She stops to rest before the gate.

OKARU. The day will soon break, and

you are not allowed to enter the gate. You will now go home and rest yourself.

RECITATIVE. The servant obeys and goes home. She peeps within.

OKARU. What is Kanpei doing? I want to see him as I have a message.

RECITATIVE. As she looks around, Kanpei sees her from behind.

KANPEI. Are you not Okaru?

OKARU. Master Kanpei, I wanted to see you. I am glad that you have come.

KANPEI. H'm, I cannot understand why you are here, alone and unattended at this time of night.

OKARU. Why, I sent back the servant who came with me, and I remained here alone, because I came on an errand from my lady. I was to see you and tell you to hand this letter-case to our lord and beg him to give it direct to Lord Moronao. But, she added, as he must be very busy, it might not reach my lord's hand, and she had better not send it to-night. But I wanted to see you, and so I said to her that however busy our lord might be, he would surely have

time to hand an ode or two to Lord Moronao. And so I hurried here, and I am quite out of breath.

KANPEI. Then, all that is needed is that our lord should himself hand this letter-case to Lord Moronao. Well, I will go and give it to our lord, and so wait for me.

RECITATIVE. Suddenly, a voice is heard calling out within the gate.

A VOICE. Kanpei, Kanpei! Lord Hangwan is calling you. Kanpei, Kanpei!

KANPEI. Here, sir. I am coming. Oh, how impatient!

RECITATIVE. As Kanpei parts from Okaru and goes in, out comes Sagisaka Bannai with stealthy steps.

BANNAI. What do you say, Okaru? Deep is love's stratagem. As I saw you whispering with Kanpei, I called him away by pretending that his lord wanted him; was not that finely done? Lord Moronao says he has something to ask of you; and as for me, I want.....O darling, darling.

RECITATIVE. As he tries to embrace her, she pushes him away.

OKARU. Come, don't be so improper. You serve in a house noted for etiquette, and you can be so boorish. How vulgar, how unmannerly of you!

BANNAI. That is too cruel.

RECITATIVE. In the dark he makes several attempts to catch hold of her hand. Voices are heard.

VOICES. Master Bannai, Master Bannai! Lord Moronao wants you this minute. Master Bannai, Master Bannai!

RECITATIVE. Two servants come out and stare vacantly around.

SERVANTS. Here you are, Master Bannai. Lord Moronao has long been asking for you. What, you, who serve in a house noted for etiquette, run after a woman! How vulgar, how unmannerly of you!

BANNAI. Hang it, they say the same thing as she did.

RECITATIVE. He accompanies the servants with a sulky face; and immediately after, Kanpei comes in.

KANPEI. Did you see what I did? That fellow Bannai hoaxed me just now; and if I

came and told him that he was wanted, he would have said, "Shut up, it is an old trick"; and so I gave drink to the servants and played the trick that he could not see through. Ha, ha, I had him there beautifully. Now that I have got rid of him, come with me.

RECITATIVE. And he takes her by the hand.

OKARU. Oh, how impatient you are! Please, wait a moment.

KANPEI. What do you say? There is no need to wait, and the day will break before long. Come at once.

RECITATIVE. He presses her; and to love inclined, she is nothing loth.

OKARU. But here are people about.

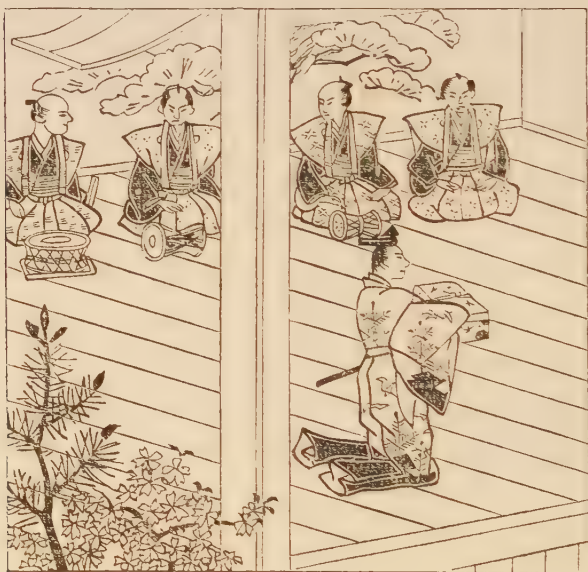
RECITATIVE. From within the palace is heard the song of Takasago:—"They sit on the root of the pine-tree."

KANPEI. That song reminds me; let us sit on the bench.

RECITATIVE. And they go out hand in hand.

RECITATIVE. The prelude is sung, and in

the orchestra are heard the sounds of the *tsuzumi** and the drum. They celebrate the long-continued peace and prosperity of the land. Lord Tadayoshi is highly pleased with the entertainment.



Wakasanosuke is impatiently waiting for Moronao and glances into the interior of the Palace. He tightens the cords of his long *hakama* and grasps with all his strength the

*A drum with a slender body, beaten by hand.

hilt of his sword, ready to draw it and cut down Moronao. Moronao and his servant Bannai, unaware that he is waiting, come out and see him from afar.

MORONAO. Why, Lord Wakasanosuke, you are come betimes. Well, I am quite crest-fallen ; you have beaten me. By the bye, there is something that I must explain to you, that I must apologise to you for.

RECITATIVE. He throws down his sword and dirk before him.

MORONAO. Lord Wakasanosuke, hear me while I explain it all. The violent language I used the other day at Tsurugaoka, how it



must have aroused your anger ! And your anger was natural, and that is why I wish to apologise. What I said then from some

misunderstanding I look upon as the greatest blunder of my life. See how a samurai bows to the floor and begs your pardon! I can do so now because you are a man of the world; but if it had been some excitable bungler, why, he would have cut me down on the spot. Oh, it gives me the shivers to think of it. Do you know, when I saw you turn away, I clasped my hands and bowed to you with gratitude for your magnanimity. Ha, ha, ha, when we age, we turn cowards. Think of my years and I am sure you are not a man to refuse when you see a samurai throw down his sword and beg your pardon with clasped hands. I entreat you again and again. Bannai, come and ask pardon with me.

RECITATIVE. Wakasanosuke, who does not dream that his money was the cause of all this fawning, finds his energy gone and cannot now unsheathe his sword. With the weapon beside him that he was ready to draw, he hangs down his head in deep thought. From behind the low hedge, Honzo watches without once blinking.

MORONAO. Ah, Bannai, why is Enya late? He is quite different to Lord Wakasanosuke. He is an unmannerly man. He does not yet show his face here. As such is the master, so there is not one among his councilors who gives careful attention to things. Come, Lord Wakasanosuke, let us go to His Highness. Now, rise; you have seen me apologise, and you surely are satisfied.

WAKASANOSUKE. No, I do not feel well. Pray, go before me.

MORONAO. What is the matter? A stomach-ache? Quick, Bannai, rub down his back. Shall I give you some medicine?

WAKASANOSUKE. No, I am not so ill as that.

MORONAO. Then, rest awhile. I will go and explain to His Highness. Show him into another room, Bannai.

RECITATIVE. Both master and servant force their attentions upon him; and though he is annoyed, he submits and is taken into a room in the interior of the Palace.

HONZO. Ah, now a heavy load is off my mind.

RECITATIVE. Honzo bows to Heaven and earth in gratitude, and then retires into a neighbouring room. Soon after, Enya Hangwan comes to the long passage which leads to His Highness's presence. Moronao sees him and calls out.

MORONAO. Late, late. What think you? Did I not tell you to be here by the seventh hour to-day?

HANGWAN. Yes, I am to blame for my lateness; but I think there is still time ere we appear before His Highness.

RECITATIVE. He takes a letter-case out of his sleeve.

HANGWAN. A servant of mine has brought this to be handed to you; it is from my wife Kaoyo.

RECITATIVE. He hands it to Moronao.

MORONAO. Yes, yes. Your wife is a very accomplished lady. Hearing that I take to the composition of poetry, she has asked me to correct her odes. No doubt, she has written on the matter.

RECITATIVE. He opens the letter-case and reads out.

MORONAO.

“Heavy the burden love doth lay,
E'en when 'tis free from sin;
Let not thy heart, then, go astray
Unlawful love to win.”*

Why, this is an ode from the “New Collection of Odes, Ancient and Modern.” Does she wish me to correct an old ode? Humph.

RECITATIVE. He is wrapped in thought. Then his love is rejected, and has she confessed to her husband? He conceals his chagrin as he turns to Enya.

MORONAO. Lord Hangwan, did you see this ode?

HANGWAN. I see it now for the first time.

MORONAO. H'm, when I was reading it? Ah, your wife is a very chaste lady. Even an ode that she sends me is of this kind, “Let not thy heart go astray unlawful love to win.” Most chaste, most chaste. You are a lucky man. No wonder you come late

*One of the ten precepts in verse, by Jakunen, a noted priest and poet (died in 1137).

to the Palace. As you are always sticking close to your wife, you give no thought to your duties here.

RECITATIVE. Hangwan does not know that this insult is heaped upon him in return for Moronao's having taken back his abuse from Wakasanosuke. He checks his rising passions.

ENYA. Ha, ha. Are you merry with wine, my lord? You have been drinking, no doubt.

MORONAO. When did you pour me wine? Nay, when did I drink? Even when I am given wine and drink, I do not fail in my duty. And you, why are you late? Have you been drinking? Or have you been keeping close at home? Lord Wakasanosuke, he is so different to you; he is most diligent. Oh, your wife is chaste, beautiful, and writes a fine hand. Be proud of her. Now keep your temper. I am telling the truth. To-day when His Highness is so busy and I too am no less, you can come and say to me with a proud look, "This is my wife's ode!" If your wife is so precious, no need for you to

come here. A fellow who always remains at home like you is often compared to a carp in a well. Now listen to me. This carp thinks that there is no place in heaven or on earth like the well of three or four feet width that he lives in, for he has no opportunity of seeing other places. Then when the well is cleaned, he comes up in a bucket and is thrown into the river. He who knew only his narrow home is delighted to find himself in the river; but he loses his way and knocks his nose against a bridge-pier, which sends his body a-trembling till he gives up the ghost. You are just such another carp. Ha, ha, ha!

RECITATIVE. As he talks at random, Hangwan can endure it no longer.

HANGWAN. Are you out of your senses that you talk in this way? Are you mad, Moronao?

MORONAO. What, how dare you call a samurai a madman, ay, me, Kono Moronao, the first of all the nobles?

HANGWAN. Then, you insult me deliberately?

MORONAO. You are tiresome. What will you do if I say, yes?

HANGWAN. Why, this.

RECITATIVE. Quick as thought, he draws his sword and strikes him, inflicting a serious wound on his forehead. He strikes again;



but as Moronao lowers his body, only his *eboshi* is cut in two. Again, Enya rushes upon him, but Moronao dodges his blow; and as Moronao flees from him, Honzo rushes in from the adjoining room and catches Enya from behind.

HONZO. You are too rash, Lord Hangwan.

RECITATIVE. And while Honzo holds Enya, Moronao escapes towards the banquet-hall, stumbling at every step.

HANGWAN. I will cut you in two, Moronao. Let go, Honzo, let go.

RECITATIVE. While he struggles to get free, the whole palace is in a commotion. The officers of the palace, the *daimyo* and *shomyo*, rush in; and some surround Enya and snatch away his sword, and others attend to Moronao. Great indeed is the uproar and confusion.

(Here the stage revolves).

RECITATIVE. Great noises are heard in the Palace with both the front and back gates shut; and all is bustle with lanterns swinging in all directions. Kanpei, with a startled look, runs back and beats the back-gate almost enough to break it. He calls out in a loud voice.

KANPEI. Enya Hangwan's servant, Hayano Kanpei, is uneasy on his master's account. He begs the gate to be opened immediately.

RECITATIVE. A loud voice is heard in reply from within the gate.

A VOICE. If you have any business, go round to the front. This is the back gate.

KANPEI. I know this is the back gate; but the front gate is so crowded with retainers on horseback hurrying about that I cannot approach it. Tell me how the quarrel has ended.

A VOICE. The quarrel has been settled. For his attack upon Lord Moronao, the first of the nobles, Enya Hangwan has been order-



ed to be confined in his own house and has just been sent home in a wicker-palanquin.

KANPEI. Great Heavens!

RECITATIVE. He starts to run to the mansion.

KANPEI. No, no. If my lord is to be confined in his own house, I can still less return to the mansion.

RECITATIVE. As he walks to and fro in bewilderment, the waiting-woman Okaru, whom he lost on the way, appears.

OKARU. Oh, Master Kanpei, I have heard it all; and what must we do?

RECITATIVE. As she rushes up to him, he pushes her away.

KANPEI. What are you crying for? Kanpei can no longer be a samurai. This shall be the end.

RECITATIVE. And he puts his hand on the hilt of his sword.

OKARU. No, please, wait. Have you lost your senses, Kanpei?

KANPEI. Yes, I have lost them. And how can I help losing them? I was not with my master in his hour of sorest need.

Besides, he has been sent home like a felon in a wicker-palanquin; and the gate of his mansion has closed upon him; and all this time his servant, lost in love, did not follow him. How can I go before men with my swords on? Let go your hand.

OKARU. Please, wait a moment. What you say is true and reasonable. And who made such a faithless samurai of you? Why, it was I, and I alone; and if one of us must die, it is I who should die before you. But if you die now, who will ever praise your samurai spirit? Now think well over this. First, come with me to my father's home. Both my father and mother are country-people, but they are a worthy couple. Now that things have come to this pass, look upon it as your fate and please, listen to your wife's advice, Master Kanpei.

RECITATIVE. She bursts out crying and is soon sunk in tears.

KAMPEI. You are right. Of course you are but newly come into service and probably do not know all about our lord's house. The chief councillor of the house, Master

Oboshi Yuranosuke, has not yet returned from the country ; and when he comes back, I will ask pardon through him. Come, let us go as quickly as we can.

RECITATIVE. As they prepare to go, Sagisaka Bannai rushes out with his servants.

BANNAI. Ah, Kanpei. For attacking Lord Moronao and inflicting a slight wound upon him, your master Hangwan is confined in his house, and his head is sure to be chopped off before long. Now wrench his arms. We are going to take you home and torture you to death. So prepare yourself for your fate.

KANPEI. We are well met, Sagisaka Bannai. It will not be enough for me to kill a fellow like you ; but you shall see how neatly this arm of mine can cut you up.

BANNAI. Don't let him speak, fellows.

SERVANTS. Very well, sir.

RECITATIVE. Two of them attack him from both sides ; but he dodges them and wrenches their arms with his hands and kicks them down. In their place two more cut at him, but he receives their blows with his

sword-scabbard ; and as they turn round and come again, he strikes aside their swords with the hilt and scabbard-end of his own. And when the four men attack him together, he sends them flying at once to the right and left ; they fall down and then rise and run away in all directions. In hot anger, Bannai strikes at him ; but Kanpei dodges and catches him by the neck ; he throws him down on the ground and sets his foot upon him.

KANPEI. Now I can do as I please with you. Shall I run you through, cut you in pieces, or kill you by inches ?

RECITATIVE. But Okaru clings to his uplifted sword.

OKARU. No, no, if you kill this fellow, it will spoil your chance of a pardon. That is enough ; let him go.

RECITATIVE. As she stops him, Sagisaka wriggles out from under his foot and runs away for very life.

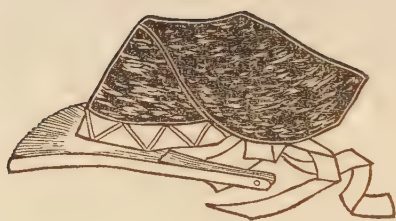
KANPEI. Oh, what a pity I let him go ! But if I killed him, it would have been a most disloyal deed. We will, we two, live in

hiding for the present, and when the time comes, we will beg for pardon.



RECITATIVE. It is already the sixth hour* ; and across the streaks of cloud in the whitening east, the crows are flying from out their nests. The lovers hurry on their way ; but their hearts are held back by their anxiety for their lord's fate. Such, alas, is the way of the world.

*About six o'clock.



ACT IV.

ACT IV.

RECITATIVE.

Enya Hangwan being confined in his house, the town-mansion at Ogigayatsu has its gates closed with large bamboo poles, and none but the members of the household is allowed to go in or out; strictly is the house guarded. Even in such a plight, gay are the waiting-women as they amuse themselves in the inner rooms. Lady Kaoyo sits with Oboshi Rikiya at her side. To enliven her lord's spirits, she has laid before her a basket of cherry-blossoms, double and treble flowered, from the hills of Kamakura; but far more beautiful than the flowers is the lady who is arranging them. Along the passage of the Willow Chamber comes Hara Goemon, a chief of troops, followed by Ono Kudayu.

GOEMON. Ah, Master Chikara, you have come early.

CHIKARA. No; until my father arrives from the country, I attend here day and night.

GOEMON. That is very dutiful of you.

RECITATIVE. Goemon lays both his hands on the mat.



GOEMON. How does my lord feel, this morning?

KAoyo. Thank you for coming, both of you. I feared much lest my lord should sink into low spirits and fall ill; but he looks cheerful and gazes from morning till evening at the flowers in the garden. And so, for his diversion, I have had these famous cherry-blossoms brought and am arranging them as you see.

GOEMON. Yes, it is as you say, my lady. Your idea is that as the flowers open, they presage that the gates will be opened and our lord released from confinement. I thought, too, of bringing something of the sort; only I am a poor hand in devising emblems. But I have forgotten to speak of an important matter. I hear that the Shogun's envoys will be here to-day, and I have no doubt they will come to release our lord from confinement. Do you not think so, Master Kudayu?

KUDAYU. Ha, ha, ha! Why, Master Goemon, these flowers gladden men's eyes only for a while, and then are scattered by the wind. Your words are like them. To give others pleasure, you pay in a way unworthy of a samurai compliments, from which the guilt comes off as readily as from the New Year's wishes. Ask me why I say so. Our lord, whose duty it was to entertain the guests, wounded one who is the head of the government and caused a great uproar in the Palace; the penalty for his offence is at the lightest banishment and at the heaviest

seppuku. It was, in fact, a great mistake of our lord to make an enemy of Lord Moronao.

GOEMON. What, do you, then, wish for our lord's banishment or death?

KUDAYU. No, I do not wish for it; but I only speak the plain truth. It all arose from your stinginess, Master Goemon. If you had thrown gold to Moronao, it would not have happened.

RECITATIVE. From his own greed he judges of others.

GOEMON. No, it is unworthy of a knight to fawn upon others. Do you not think so, Master Rikiya?

KAoyo. Do not quarrel, you two. My husband's trouble arose entirely from me. The other day, when there was an entertainment at Tsurugaoka, that lawless Moronao urged his insolent love to me who have a lord. I wished to punish him by humiliating him; and so, without telling my lord, I sent him an old ode on chastity on the pretence of asking his criticism of my own composition. Put to shame, he abused Lord Hangan in revenge for my rejection of his love.

Was it not natural that my lord, who is hasty of temper, could ill brook his insults?

RECITATIVE. When she has spoken, both Goemon and Rikiya show in their looks their deep sympathy for their lord in his anger. The envoys' arrival is announced at the porch and in the reception-room, and is also reported in the inner rooms; Lady Kaoyo sits back, and the three men have hardly gone forward to meet them before the envoys enter. They are Ishido Umanajo and Moronao's intimate friend, Yakushiji Jirozaemon. As they have come on duty, they pass without ceremony and take seats in the upper part of the chamber. From another room quietly comes in Enya Hangwan.

HANGWAN. Ha, my Lord Ishido, I thank you for coming as the Shogun's Envoy. Tell them to prepare wine. When I have heard His Highness's will, I will partake of wine with you all and cheer my spirits.

YAKUSHIJI. Yes, that is a bright idea, and I, too, will drink with you. But I fancy, when you have heard His Highness's order, the wine will hardly go down your throat.

ISHIDO. Now, listen carefully to the order which we have brought to you to-day.

RECITATIVE. He draws the written order from his breast and opens it; and Hangwan sits with reverence.

ISHIDO. These are the words: "Whereas Enya Hangwan Takasada did, out of private hate and malice, attack and wound the Governor Kono Moronao and cause a great disturbance in the Palace, his domain is confiscated and he is ordered to commit *seppuku*."

RECITATIVE. On hearing this, Lady Kaoyo is amazed; and the retainers in the chamber exchange glances, and are dumbfounded. Hangwan remains calm and composed.

HANGWAN. I humbly submit to His Highness's will. Now, you will rest yourselves after your arduous duty is done and take a cup of wine.

YAKUSHIJI. Now, Hangwan, be silent. You ought to be thankful that for your crime, for which the penalty should be death by strangling, you are ordered by His Highness's clemency to commit *seppuku*; and you

should at once prepare for death. Besides, there is the etiquette for committing *seppuku*. What do you mean by dressing yourself up in a long *haori** of the present fashion? Have you been drinking, or have you run mad? You are wanting in courtesy to Lord Ishido and me, Yakushiji, who are here by His Highness's command.

RECITATIVE. As he rebukes him, Hangwan smiles.

HANGWAN. I am neither merry with wine, nor am I mad. When I heard that the envoys were coming to-day, I expected to receive this sentence. I will show you how I am prepared.

RECITATIVE. He puts down his swords and takes off his *haori* and upper garment; and he appears in the white, uncrested robe of death. All are astonished at the sight; and Yakushiji, disappointed, sinks into sulky silence. Umanojo approaches Hangwan.

ISHIDO. I heartily sympathise with you. I am here to see the sentence carried out. You will calmly prepare yourself.

*An outer coat worn by men.

HANGWAN. I thank you for your kind words. When I drew my sword, I was prepared for the sentence. My only regret is that I was held back by Kakogawa Honzo in the Palace and prevented from slaying Moronao. I am mortified beyond expression and can never forget it. Like Kusunoki Masashige* who declared at Minatogawa that he would lengthen his life by the force of his iron will at the last moment, I will return to life again and again until my vengeance is wreaked.

RECITATIVE. While he utters these angry words, the sliding-door of the adjoining room is rapped.

RETAINERS. We, the retainers of the house, beg to be permitted to look once more upon our lord's face. May we present ourselves before him? Inquire for us, Master Goemon.

RECITATIVE. On hearing the retainers' request, Goemon turns to his lord.

*Considered the most perfect mirror of loyalty in all Japanese history. He died fighting for the Emperor at Minatogawa in 1336.

GOEMON. How shall I answer them, my lord?

HANGWAN. Their request is natural; but I cannot permit them until Yuranosuke comes.

RECITATIVE. Goemon turns to the sliding-door of the next room.

GOEMON. You have heard our lord's will, and not one of you may come in.

RECITATIVE. The retainers have not a word to say in reply, and the whole room is deadly still. At the word from his lord, Rikiya brings the dirk which he has ready for the self-immolation and places it before his lord. Calmly Hangwan doffs the *kataginu** and sits more at ease.

HANGWAN. Now, my lords, see the sentence carried out.

RECITATIVE. He draws the wooden stand towards him and, taking up the dirk, raises it to his head.

HANGWAN. Rikiya, Rikiya.

RIKIYA. My lord.

*A garment worn over the shoulders and tucked under the *hakama*. (It is worn by the envoys in the double-page illustration of this Act).

HANGWAN. Yuranosuke.....

RIKIYA. Has not yet come, my lord.

HANGWAN. H'm. I am sorry, I deeply regret, that I cannot see him before I die. There is no help for it. I can wait no longer.



RECITATIVE. He takes the dirk with the point towards him, and driving it into his left side, drags it to the right. Lady Kaoyo cannot bear to look on, but turns away, prayers on her lips and tears in her eyes. The door of the passage is suddenly pushed

open, and in rushes Oboshi Yuranosuke. No sooner does he see his master's plight than he flings himself down and bows to the floor. After him hurry in Senzaki, Yazama, and the other retainers of the house.

HANGWAN. I have long been waiting for you, Yuranosuke.

YURANOSUKE. To be able to look upon my lord while he is living, it is to me.....

HANGWAN. It is to me, too, a pleasure, a great pleasure. You have no doubt heard it all. I am truly mortified.

YURANOSUKE. I have heard it all. Now that things have come to this pass, I know not what to say to my lord. I only beg that you will die bravely.

HANGWAN. Oh, little need you to say so.

RECITATIVE. With both hands he draws the dirk from side to side, and panting with pain, he takes a long breath.

HANGWAN. This dirk I bequeath to you, Yuranosuke; and with it you will revenge my death.

RECITATIVE. With the point of the dirk, he cuts his wind-pipe, and throwing down the

bloody weapon, he falls forward ; and his breath is gone. While his lady and the retainers present wait with closed eyes, bated breath, and clenched teeth, Yuranosuke shuffles close to his lord, and taking up the dirk, bows to it. He gazes at the blood-stained point, and clenching his fist, he weeps with despair. The last words of Hangwan have penetrated to his heart's core. And at this moment he forms that resolution which will hand down Oboshi's name for faith and loyalty to the remotest posterity. Yakushiji suddenly rises to his feet.

YAKUSHIJI. Now that Hangwan is dead and gone, deliver this mansion at once.

ISHIDO. Nay, do not be peremptory, Yakushiji. Enya was the lord of a province and a castle. You gentlemen, when you have performed the funeral ceremony, you will quietly leave this mansion. I, who have come to carry out the sentence, will now go and report that I have seen your lord slay himself. I sympathise with you in your sorrow, Yuranosuke ; and if you have anything to say to me, I will hear it, and do not scruple to tell me.

RECITATIVE. He bows silently to the retainers present and calmly goes out.

YAKUSHIJI. I, too, will rest in another room till this dead body is got rid of. Let my servants come. Now, throw out of the gate these retainers' rubbish. And don't let these new *ronin* make off with Hangwan's personal property.

RECITATIVE. He glares all around the chamber and enters another room. Lady Kaoyo bursts out crying.

KAOYO. Ah me, is there anything more sorrowful than the samurai's life? There was many a thing I longed to say to my lord at his last moment; but I bore my grief in silence because I feared the envoys would despise me as a faint-hearted woman. Alas, my poor, poor lord!

RECITATIVE. She throws herself upon the body and let loose her sorrows, regardless of all around her.

YURANOSUKE. Come, Rikiya. Escort at once our lord's remains together with our lady, to the family temple of Komyoji. I will overtake you and perform the funeral ceremony.

Hori, Yazama, Odera, Hazama, and others, guard them on the way.

RECITATIVE. Immediately, the palanquin is brought in and set on a stand. The door is opened ; and they all come forward and, with tears, place the remains within and silently lift up the palanquin. They comfort their lady who is lamenting piteously. The retainers escort the palanquin and hurry to the family temple. A few see it to the door and, returning, resume their seats. Out speaks Ono Kudayu.

KUDAYU. Master Oboshi, you succeeded your father, Master Yawata Rokuro, as Chief Councillor. Though I am next to you in rank, I and all of us are from to-day *ronin*. We have no means of supporting wife and children. Let us, then, divide among ourselves the money which our lord kept for military use, and deliver this mansion at once, or we shall be wanting in respect to Yakushiji.

YAGORO. No ; in my opinion, since it arouses our anger to see our enemy Kono Moronao still alive, we should prepare for the attack of our enemy and make our last stand in this mansion.

SADAKURO. Ah, wait. It is a bad idea, that of dying in fight. The best plan is, as my father Kudayu says, to hand over the mansion and divide the money.

RECITATIVE. During this discussion, Yuranosuke has remained silent; but now he speaks out.

YURANOSUKE. The proposal that Yagoro has made in this council agrees with my plan. We should really die and follow our lord; but I have decided that, instead of our slaying ourselves to no purpose, we should wait for the troops of Ashikaga and die in battle.

KUDAYU. Eh, what do you say? I thought you would give us good counsel; but no, with a *ronin's* fatuous obstinacy, you would take up arms against Lord Ashikaga. That is recklessness. I cannot agree to it.

SADAKURO. Yes, you are right, father. I will not agree, either. We would be left out of this consultation. It is useless to remain here any longer. Let us go home.

KUDAYU. Yes, we will do so. I take my leave; but pray, do not go yet, gentlemen.

RECITATIVE. And father and son, they go home together.

YAGORO. Ha, the avaricious Ono and his son! What cowards, to be filled with fear when they hear that we are going to die fighting, and then to run away. Do not mind them, Master Oboshi, but let us prepare to meet the enemy.

YURANOSUKE. No, no, Yagoro. What cause of anger have we against Lord Ashikaga that we should take up arms against him? It was only my plot to test the spirit of those two, father and son. Let us deliver the mansion to Yakushiji and go each his way. We will meet again at Yamashina, near the capital, and there open our minds to one another and consult upon our future plans.

RECITATIVE. No sooner has he spoken than Jirozaemon comes out of a room.

YAKUSHIJI. What, still consulting? When you have got rid of the body, make over the house at once.

GOEMON. Yes, we have kept you waiting. Examine well before you take over our lord's

furniture and his arms and equipages. Come, let us go, Master Yuranosuke.

YURANOSUKE. Yes, we will go.

RECITATIVE. They quietly rise ; and as the thought comes to them that they are looking for the last time to-day at the mansion where their families for generations served day and night their lord's house, they linger and gaze back, loth to leave it.

(Here the stage revolves).

RECITATIVE. As they stand outside the gate, Rikiya, Yazama, Hori, Odera, and others, who escorted their lord, return running.

RIKIYA AND OTHERS. Have you, then, given up the mansion ? We will now wait for Tadayoshi's troops and die fighting.

YURANOSUKE. No, no. Now is that the time to die. See this, all of you.

RECITATIVE. He draws and holds up his lord's bequest.

YURANOSUKE. This is the dirk, with its tip stained with our lord's blood, on which his soul still rests thirsting for vengeance. And with this dirk we must cut off Moronao's head and so accomplish our object.

RECITATIVE. The retainers are stirred by his words. Within the mansion Yakushiji is having the gate-doors clamped.

YAKUSHIJI. They are punished by Heaven for the attack on Lord Moronao. It serves them right.

RECITATIVE. His servants clap their hands and laugh long and loud. The younger samurai run back to the gate, crying :—

SAMURAI. Do you hear that?

YURANOSUKE. Have you no wish to avenge our late lord's death?

RECITATIVE. Hearing his words, they all go out together, looking back with anger at the mansion.



ACT V.

ACT V.

RECITATIVE.

The hawk, even when it is on the verge of starvation, does not pick rice-ears contrary to its nature. For many days has Hayano Kanpei dwelt in his temporary home near Yamazaki; and for the fault committed in the flush of youth, he makes his living now by hunting deer and monkeys on these hills. He is caught with his gun in a summer shower, and takes shelter under a pine-tree until it ceases. Yonder comes a traveller with a little lantern stretched out with a bow, which he covers with the skirt of his rain-coat to keep the light burning. He hurries along the dark road in the heavy rain. Kanpei goes up to him.

KANPEI. If you please, will you kindly give me a light?

RECITATIVE. The traveller stops short and stands on the defensive.

TRAVELLER. Humph, I travel alone, fully knowing that this road is unsafe. I see you have a gun and I certainly cannot give you a light. Come another time.

RECITATIVE. He watches him, ready to cut him down if he moves an inch.

KANPEI. Well, I do not wonder at your mistaking me for a robber; but I am a hunter of the neighbourhood. I am in a great trouble as I have got my tinder drenched in the heavy rain. Come, I will hand you my gun and get the light myself.

RECITATIVE. Hearing his straightforward reply, the traveller looks fixedly at his face.

TRAVELLER. Are you not Hayano Kanpei?

KANPEI. And you are Senzaki Yagoro?

YAGORO. I am glad to see you well.

KANPEI. And you, too, are in sound health.

RECITATIVE. It is long since they last met. They cannot forget the fall of their master's house, and as they think of it with resentment, they both clench their fists. Kanpei bows down his head and remains

speechless for a while; and then he speaks out.

KANPEI. I am truly ashamed of myself, and cannot even show my face to an old fellow-retainer like you. Has my samurai's fortune come to an end? It was my fated ill-luck that when I was in attendance upon my lord, the great calamity should have fallen upon his house. I was not present on the spot at the time, and I could not go back to the mansion; and I thought I could only wait till the fit occasion came to entreat his pardon. But, to my amazement, he was condemned to death. Great Heavens, I cried, this is all Moronao's doing and I will at least follow my lord to the other world. And I put my hand on my sword; yet, thought I again, what worthy deed have I done that I could appear before my lord and escort him on the lonely road of death? I wore my heart out in pondering over what I should do in atonement. I have secretly heard it rumoured that Master Yuranosuke, his son, and Master Goemon, and others are plotting to avenge our lord's death. Unhappy as I

am, I was not driven out of service ; and if I could, by some means, obtain an interview with Master Yuranosuke and be allowed to sign my name in the leaguers' covenant, it would be an honour to me and my house for ever. Since it is my fortune to meet you, let me avail myself of this rare opportunity and beg you to make me worthy of a samurai. I appeal to our old friendship, to your knightly compassion.

RECITATIVE. He lays both his hands before him on the ground, and filled with remorse for his former ill-deed, he weeps manly tears. Pitiful is his plight. Yagoro, though he thinks his old comrade's repentance but natural, cannot here recklessly reveal the great plot.

YAGORO. Now, now, Kanpei, in your confession, you mix up with it something about a plot and a covenant. That is nonsense. There has never been such a rumour. I am taking an urgent message from Master Yuranosuke to Master Goemon. We intend to raise a monument in our late lord's burial-place. But we, being but *ronin*, are poor,

and the monument is a thing which will be pointed out as Lord Enya Hangwan's to the latest posterity. And so I am going on an errand to collect the money for the purpose and seeking out those who are still grateful for our late lord's favours. And if you yet feel grateful.....do you understand?

RECITATIVE. To make Oboshi's plot covertly known while speaking of the monument, it is, indeed, an act of true comradeship.

KANPEI. I thank you, Master Yagoro. Yes, I heard long ago that you were collecting money, it was said, for the monument. I, too, have made every effort to offer some money, and hoped, on the strength of the contribution, to obtain pardon. But Master Yagoro, how ashamed I am! See my present condition; it is a punishment for my disloyalty to my lord, and I have none to turn to for help. But Karu's father, Yoichibei, is a worthy man. He and his wife lament the unfaithfulness with which we, husband and wife, served Lord Hangwan, and are most anxious that I should find means to become a samurai again. I will seize this occasion to

tell them of my meeting you and, after giving an account of our talk, let them know how I may be restored to my former position. Then they will not, I am sure, hesitate to sell for their children's sake the little land they possess. I beg, when I have brought the money, you will present it to Master Goemon.



YAGORO. Yes, I will now go and tell Master Goemon what you have said to me and through him ask pardon of Master Yuranosuke. I will give you an answer without fail the day after to-morrow. This is the address at which Master Goemon has put up.

RECITATIVE. As he gives him the address, Kanpei receives it with gratitude.

KANPEI. I am thankful for your manifold kindness. I will immediately find the money and wait upon you the day after to-morrow. If you wish to come to my house, you will turn to the left from the ferry at Yamazaki, and you will soon find Yoichibei's house by inquiring in the neighbourhood. You had better go quickly before the night grows late. The road is still more unsafe further on, and so take great care of yourself.

YAGORO. No fear. Until the monument is raised, not a flea shall bite this body of mine. You, too, keep yourself in good health. I shall look forward to hearing of your contribution. Fare you well.

RECITATIVE. They part, and each hurries on his way. The rain again comes down. Feeble footsteps are heard. Though he has not lost his way in the dark, he is a simple, honest old man who comes hanging on his staff, drawn hither by a blind love of his child. He hears a voice calling to him from behind.

A VOICE. Hi, hi, old man. You are a good road-companion.

RECITATIVE. The speaker is Ono Kudayu's son, Sadakuro, who, having no place to go to, has turned a highwayman and nightly plies his trade on this road. He has a flat sword at his side.

SADAKURO. I have been calling you a long time; could you not hear me? It is bold of you at your age to travel alone on this unsafe road. I will bear you company.

RECITATIVE. As he comes in front of him and looks at him with over-curious eyes, Yoichibei shrinks with fear; but he conceals it with an old man's tact.

YOICHIBEI. Now this is a kindness I should not have expected of one so young. Being an old man, I do not care to travel alone; but wherever we go, there is nothing so precious as money. As I could not pay last year's tax, I went to ask for help to my relations; but not a single cash could I get from them, and as I could not stay long where I could obtain no assistance, I am going home alone, heavy at heart.

RECITATIVE. Before he has done speaking, the other cries out.

SADAKURO. Hold your tongue. I did not come to hear that you have not paid your tax. Look here, old man. Listen carefully to what I am going to say. It is this. I saw long ago that you have in your bosom a purse of striped cloth with forty or fifty *ryo* in it, if it is gold ; and I have followed you. Lend it to me. See, I entreat you with clasped hands. I dare say, you got the money to rescue your child from some foolish trouble. Now that I have set my eyes upon it, why,

there is no getting away. So make up your mind to it. Please, lend it to me, do.



RECITATIVE. He puts his hand into Yoichibei's bosom and pulls out a purse of striped cloth.

YOICHIBEI. Oh, please, sir, that.....

SADAKURO. What of that? When you have so much money.....

RECITATIVE. As he snatches it, Yoichibei clings to his hand.

YOICHIBEI. No, no, sir. I took some small coin out of this pouch, it is true, to buy straw-sandals a while ago; but there is now in it only a few lumps of rice for luncheon and medicines my daughter gave me for bilious attacks. Please, let me go, sir.

RECITATIVE. And he snatches back the pouch and tries to escape; but Sadakuro runs before him and intercepts him.

SADAKURO. What an obstinate fellow, to be sure! I speak you fair, because I do not wish to do anything cruel; and you take advantage of it. Come, fork out the money. If you hesitate, I will kill you at one blow.

RECITATIVE. He draws his sword and raises it for a downward stroke; and before Yoichibei can cry out, he strikes at him as at a dry bamboo-pole. Did the sword deflect or the hands err? He misses his mark, and Yoichibei grasps the naked blade with both his hands.

YOICHIBEI. Do you, then, really mean to kill me?

SADAKURO. Of course I do. I kill you because I saw your money; and so give up the ghost without more complaint.

RECITATIVE. He points the sword at his breast.

YOICHIBEI. Please, just wait, sir. There is no help for it. Yes, this is money. But I have an only daughter; and she has a husband who is more dear to her than life itself. That husband is in want of money. He is, for certain reasons, a *ronin* at present. It was through her, says my daughter, that he became a *ronin*, and she has asked me and my wife to help him to return to his former samurai's position. But as we are poor, we could do nothing. At last, after long consultation with my wife, we hit upon a plan; we made our daughter agree to it and have kept it absolutely secret from our son-in-law. And this is the money we got after we three, father, mother, and daughter, had truly wept tears of blood. And if you take it away, what will become of my daughter?

See, I clasp my hands to you ; please, let me go. You, too, appear to have been a samurai ; and the samurai should help each other. Without this money, my daughter and her husband cannot hold up their heads in the world. He is my only daughter's husband ; and you will guess how I pity and love him. Have compassion on me, sir, and let me go. You are still young and I suppose you are childless ; but when the time comes and a child is born to you, you will know how natural are the words I have spoken to you. So, please, let me leave this place in safety. Only a *ri** from here is my home. You may kill me when I have handed the money to my son-in-law. Please, sir, I should like to die after I have seen my daughter's face light up with joy. Please, please, sir. Oh, help, help !

RECITATIVE. But his cries only resound with piteous echoes in the hills around.

SADAKURO. Oh, that is indeed sad. Cry on. Hear me, old dotard. If I rise in the world with that money of yours, the blessing

*About two miles and a half.

of this act of charity will raise your son too. For charity never makes an evil return to the donor. Poor fellow!

RECITATIVE. He thrusts his sword; and as Yoichibei writhes with pain, he kicks him round with his foot.

SADAKURO. Oh, how pitiful! Though, no doubt, it hurts you, do not bear me spite for it. I kill you because you have money; for if you had no money, what should I do to you? Your money is your enemy, old man. Oh, save us, Amida Buddha!* Oh, save us, Wondrous Doctrine of the Lotus Sutra!* Go wherever you please.

RECITATIVE. Without drawing out his sword, he turns it round and round. The grass is dyed crimson with blood; and the old man, in the excess of his pain, breathes his last. Sadakuro, now that he is dead, takes the pouch and in the darkness counts the money in it.

SADAKURO. Ha, fifty *ryo*. 'Tis long since we last met, gentlemen; and I thank you for your coming.

*Buddhist prayers.

RECITATIVE. He hangs the pouch around his neck, and pushes and kicks the body into the valley below. The mud on the corpse splashes upon himself; but all unwitting, he stands up, and sees behind him a wounded wild boar rush headlong towards him. In haste he steps aside. The wild boar runs straight on, snorting, kicking roots of trees and corners of rocks, and leaping through mud and shrubbery. And as Sadakuro comes forward and looks after it, a gun-report is heard, and two bullets pierce his spine and

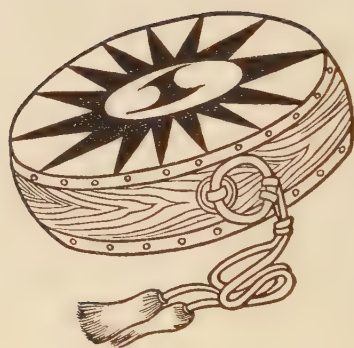


penetrate to his ribs. Without a cry or groan, he falls on his back and dies; it does

one's heart good to see him die. Thinking that he has killed the wild boar, Kanpei comes out with his gun in his hand and gropes here and there for the game. When he touches and raises the body, he finds that it is not the wild boar.

KANPEI. What, this is a man! Great Heavens, I have missed it!

RECITATIVE. As it is pitch-dark, he cannot in his fear ask who his victim is. As he raises him in his arms to see if he still breathes, his hands touch the pouch; and grasping it, he perceives it holds forty or fifty *ryo*. He raises it again and again to his head to thank Heaven for what, doubtless, is its gift; and then he rushes away as if on wings, even more swiftly than the wild boar.



ACT VI.

ACT VI.

RECITATIVE

“The country dance is over;

Come out, old man, come with your dame,

Come, old man, come with your dame.”

So sing the country folk as they pound their barley. Here stands the weather-beaten cottage of Yoichibei, a peasant in the noted village of Yamazaki; and here now passes Hayano Kanpei a *ronin's* life. His wife Okaru has risen and, while waiting for her husband who is not yet home this morning, brings out her toilet-case to smooth her dishevelled hair. With her thoughts bent upon her fate which she still keeps a secret, she combs her hair with a comb of boxwood and dresses it with neatness and elegance; her beauty is too fair for a country-place. Her aged mother, hanging to her staff, comes tottering home from the fields.

MOTHER. Oh, you have done up your hair, daughter! And it is well done. Every-

where in the country they are now busy harvesting barley; and just now, near the bamboo jungle, I heard young men sing the barley-pounders' song, "Come out, old man, come with your dame." That made me very anxious as my old man is late coming home, and I went to the end of the village; but not a shadow of him could I espy.

OKARU. Yes, mother, I wonder what makes him so late. I will just run and see.

MOTHER. No, it is not well for a young woman to walk alone. You, especially, never liked from your childhood to walk about in the country; and though we sent you for service to Lord

Enya's, you apparently could not live away from the lonely country and came back to us. While you are with Kanpei, you never show any sign of discontent.



OKARU. Oh, mother, that is but natural. When I live with one I love, I would put up willingly with poverty, to say nothing of country life. When the Feast of Lanterns comes, I mean to do as the song says, "Come out, old man, come with your dame," and go with Kanpei to see the dance. You, too, did that sort of thing when you were young.

RECITATIVE. It is a light-tongued hussy, and her spirits, too, appear restless.

MOTHER. Cheerfully as you may talk, in your heart.....

OKARU. No, no. I am quite composed. I have been long prepared to go to service in Gion-machi for our lord's sake; but for my aged father to take so much trouble.....

MOTHER. Do not say that. Low as his position is, your brother, too, was a servant of Lord Enya; and it is not like taking trouble on another person's account.

RECITATIVE. As mother and daughter talk, hurriedly comes along the road with a palanquin Ichimonjiya, of Gionmachi. Stopping the palanquin, he calls out from outside the door.

ICHIMONJIYA. Is Master Yoichibei at home ?

RECITATIVE. With these words, he enters at the door.

MOTHER. Why, you have kindly come all this way. Now, bring the tobacco-tray, daughter, and offer tea.

RECITATIVE. As the mother and daughter welcome him, Ichimonjiya speaks.

ICHIMONJIYA. Well, I thank your old man for coming last night ; I hope he came home safely.

MOTHER. What, have you not brought him with you ? That is strange. Since he has not.....

ICHIMONJIYA. What, has he not come home ? Strange ! Perhaps, as he was loitering before the shrine of Inari,* he was bewitched by a fox. Now, just as we had agreed when I came here the other day, we decided last night that your daughter should serve for full five years only and her wages were to be a hundred *ryo*. Then the old

*The God of Rice, whose messenger is the fox, to which popular superstition ascribes supernatural powers.

man said that as he had some money to deliver last night, he wanted to sign the bond of service and receive in advance the whole sum of a hundred *ryo*. As he asked me with tears, I gave him half the sum when the bond was signed and promised to pay the remainder when the girl was delivered to me. And when I handed him the fifty *ryo*, he was overjoyed and raised the money to his head with rapture. It was about the fourth hour* when he went away rejoicing. I told him that he should not walk home alone with the money at night and tried to stop him; but he would not listen to me, and so he went home. It may be, on the road.....

OKARU. No, no, nowhere would he stop on the way. Do you not think so, mother?

MOTHER. Yes, certainly. Especially, as he would not lose a moment if he could help it in hurrying home and making you and me glad by showing us the money. I cannot understand it.

ICHIMONJIYA. Well, whether you under-

*About ten o'clock.

stand it or not, that is your business. I will hand you the balance and take the girl home.

RECITATIVE. He takes the money from his bosom.

ICHIMONJIYA. Here is the remaining fifty *ryo*; and it makes up the hundred *ryo*. I hand it to you, and so take it.

MOTHER. But before your father comes home, I cannot let you go, can I, Karu?

ICHIMONJIYA. Why, dawdling like this, we shall never have done. See, here is Yoichibei's seal; you have not a word to say now. This bond speaks for me. This girl's service I have bought with money to-day; and a day's delay means so much loss to me. I suppose I must use force.

RECITATIVE. He seizes Okaru by the hand and drags her.

MOTHER. Please, wait.

RECITATIVE. The mother clings to him; but he pushes her away. He forces Okaru into the palanquin. But just as it is lifted up, Kanpei returns, gun on his shoulder and with a straw rain-coat and hat on. He enters the house.

KANPEI. My wife in the palanquin, where are you going?

MOTHER. I am glad you have come home at this moment.

RECITATIVE. He wonders at the mother's joy.

KANPEI. There appears to be something at the bottom of this. Mother, wife, let me hear it.

RECITATIVE. And he sits right in the middle of the room.

ICHIMONJIYA. Oh, are you the girl's husband? Here is the bond with the old man's seal, in which he says no one whatever, be he the girl's husband, actual or affianced, shall offer any obstruction. And I don't care who you are, and I am going to take away the girl at once.

MOTHER. Oh, you are no doubt puzzled, my son. We had heard from our daughter that you were in want of money; and much as we wished to get it for you, we had no prospect of procuring a single *sen*. And so says my old man, "I do not suppose our son is thinking of getting the money by

selling his wife ; but it may be that he has such a wish and is deterred from carrying it out only by the presence of her parents. What if this old father sells her without his knowledge ? It is a custom with the samurai, when other means are exhausted, to take her back by force. It is no shame to sell one's wife, and if I find for him in this way the money he requires in his lord's cause, I do not think he will be very angry with me." So yesterday he went to Gion-machi to settle the matter, but he has not come home yet. While we, I and my daughter, were feeling anxious at his absence, comes this man and says that as he gave the old man half the sum last night, he will pay the remaining fifty *ryo* now and take away my daughter this moment. I tell him I must see the old man first, but he won't listen to me, and insists upon taking her away. What shall we do, Kanpei ?

KANPEI. I am truly grateful for my father-in-law's kindness. But I, too, have had a piece of good fortune ; of that, however, I will speak later on. I do not think we should

hand over my wife before her father comes home.



ICHIMONJIYA. And why ?

KANPEI. Well, the bond gives you the parent's authority. Though I do not doubt that you paid half the money last night.....

ICHIMONJIYA. Here, I am Ichimonjiya who am known all over Kyoto and Osaka and have in my employ girls enough to make an island of Amazons. Do you think I would say that I had paid the money when I hadn't ? There is still another thing that I can tell you for certain. When I saw your old man wrap the fifty *ryo* in his towel and put it in his bosom, I said to him it was risky, and gave him a pouch to put it in and hang round his neck. The pouch was made of a piece of cloth of the same pattern as this garment of mine ; and no doubt, he will presently come home with it round his neck.

KANPEI. What do you say? A pouch of the same pattern as the dress you wear?

ICHIMONJIYA. Yes.

KANPEI. Of the same pattern?

ICHIMONJIYA. Is not that certain proof?

RECITATIVE. Upon hearing this, Kanpei is amazed. After looking around him, he stealthily takes out the pouch from his sleeve; as he gazes at it, he sees it is of silk and cotton and does not differ a jot in pattern from the man's dress. Great Heavens! Was it then his father that he killed with his gun last night? He feels a far greater pang than if his own heart had been pierced by a bullet. Ignorant of his feelings, his wife asks him.

OKARU. Come, my husband, do not look so restless; but decide for us whether I am to go or not.

KANPEI. Oh, yes. Since he speaks so convincingly, I fear you must go.

OKARU. What, without seeing father?

KANPEI. Yes. I saw your father for a moment this morning; I do not know when he will come home.

OKARU. Did you then see father? Why did you not say so before instead of making mother and me anxious about him?

RECITATIVE. Ichimonjiya takes advantage of the position.

ICHIMONJIYA. Doubt a man, they say, only after inquiring seven times. Since we know the old man's whereabouts now, we all feel at ease. If you still resist, we must appeal to law. But it is now settled, I am glad to see. Mother and husband, when you come to worship at Rokujo, pay me a visit. Come, get into the palanquin.

OKARU. Yes, yes. I am going now, Kanpei. My two aged parents you will have to support, and father, especially, for he is always ailing, and you will please take great care of him.

RECITATIVE. Unaware of her father's death, she, poor girl, consigns him to her husband's care. Had he not better, thinks Kanpei, tell the whole truth? No, he cannot do it before others, and he bears in silence the anguish of his heart.

MOTHER. Your husband would like to

have parting words with you, but I suppose he fears it might upset you.

OKARU. No, no, though I part from him, I feel no sorrow since I am selling myself for our lord. I go with a brave heart. But, mother, I am sorry I cannot see father before I go.

MOTHER. Oh, when he returns, I am sure he will go and see you. Use moxa so as not to fall ill, and come and show me your bright face sometimes. You will be uncomfortable without paper and a fan. Have you everything you want? Don't stumble and hurt yourself.



RECITATIVE. She looks after her until she gets into the palanquin. They bid each other farewell. By what ill-fate is it that with such a fair daughter, this sorrow falls upon her? The mother weeps with clenched teeth; and the daughter clings to the side of the palanquin and chokes with tears in her desire not to let her crying be seen or heard. The palanquin is, alas, lifted up, and the bearers hurry away on the road. The mother stands gazing after her.

MOTHER. Ah, how sad I must have made my daughter with my foolish words! O my son, when even I, her mother, am resigned to her going, I hope you will not keep thinking of her and make yourself ill. How is it that father does not come home? You said you saw him, did you not?

KANPEI. Ah, yes.

MOTHER. And where did you see him? And where did he go when he left you?

KANPEI. Well, we parted at..... let me see..... was it at Toba or Fushimi? Or Yodo or Takeda?

RECITATIVE. While he speaks at random,

Meppo Yahachi, Tanegashima no Roku, and Tanuki no Kakubei, three hunters of the neighbourhood, come in without ceremony, bearing on a shutter Yoichibei's body, covered over with a straw rain-coat.



YAHACHI. As we were coming home from the night's work, we found your old man's body, and so we have brought it here.

RECITATIVE. The mother is amazed.

MOTHER. Whose deed was it? Tell me, my son, who is the murderer? Please, revenge his death. Oh, my husband, my husband!

RECITATIVE. But her cries are in vain ; there is naught but tears for her.

HUNTERS. Oh, how grieved you must be, old mother ! Appeal to the Lord Deputy's office and have the matter inquired into. We are very sorry for you.

MOTHER. The hunters all leave her and go to their own homes. The mother, amid her tears, comes close to Kanpei.

MOTHER. Now, my son, I thought my suspicions unjust ; but there is one thing I cannot understand. Though you were, it is true, formerly a samurai, yet one would have expected you to be amazed when you saw your father-in-law's dead body. When you met him on the road, did you not receive money from him ? What did he say to you ? Now, tell me. Say it. Ah, you cannot answer ; and this is the reason why.

RECITATIVE. And she puts her hand into Kanpei's bosom and draws out the pouch.

MOTHER. A while ago I caught sight of this pouch. See, it is stained with blood, and you must have killed the old man.

KANPEI. No, this.....

MOTHER. What of it? You may try to hide it; but the all-seeing Heaven reveals it. And the money for which you killed the old man, for whom was it intended? Yes, I see. You thought that your father-in-law, being poor, would keep back a half of the money for which he sold his daughter, and not give you the whole of it; and so you killed him and took it all. How it galls me to think that until this very day we were deceived and believed you to be an upright man, you inhuman monster! I am so astonished that tears refuse to flow. Oh, poor Yoichibei, you did not know what a brute your son is; in your wish to restore him to the samurai's rank, you ran about, old man as you were, in Kyoto without taking a night's rest, and at expense to yourself, you helped him; and all this has led to your own undoing, and you are bitten by the dog that you have been feeding. How could you have killed him in this cruel manner, you devil, you serpent? Return me father, restore to life my old man.

RECITATIVE. In her fury, she seizes him

by the hair, and pulling him towards her, beats his head on the floor.

MOTHER. My anger would not be satisfied even if I tortured you to death inch by inch.

RECITATIVE. With revengeful words, she lays her face on the floor and gives way to tears. For his misdeed, Kanpei feels his whole body covered with boiling sweat; he clings to the mat, and he knows that the punishment of Heaven has come upon him. At this moment arrive two samurai, wearing deep wicker hats.



SAMURAI. Is Hayano Kanpei at home? Hara Goemon and Senzaki Yagoro beg to see him.

RECITATIVE. It is an inopportune moment; but Kanpei takes his sword and with bent hips, goes forth to meet them.

KANPEI. You are welcome, gentlemen. I thank you for thus honouring my humble home.

RECITATIVE. He bows to them.

GOEMON. I see there is some trouble in the house.

KANPEI. Nay, it is but a slight household matter. Pray, do not mind it, but walk straight in.

GOEMON. Then, by your leave, we will do so.

RECITATIVE. They go straight in and take their seats; and Kanpei lays both his hands on the mat in front of them.

KANPEI. It was a serious fault of mine that I failed to be present when the great misfortune befell our lord; and for it I have not a word to say in excuse. But I humbly beg you, gentlemen, to intercede for me so

that my offence may be pardoned and I may be permitted to attend on the anniversary of our lord's demise, together with others of our clan.

RECITATIVE. He speaks in humble supplication.

GOEMON. Master Yuranosuke was first much pleased that you, a *ronin* without any means, should have offered so much money towards the cost of the monument; but the monument is to be placed in our lord's burial-ground, and as it was felt that it would not please our lord's spirit to use for building the monument the money of one who has been disloyal and faithless to him, the money is returned to you unopened.

RECITATIVE. While Goemon is yet speaking, Yagoro takes the money from his bosom and lays it before Kanpei. In his confusion, he is almost out of his senses; and the mother comes forward with tears.

MOTHER. You villain, do you not see it is the retribution that has come this moment for your father's death? Hear me, sirs. My husband, old as he was, did not think of his

own future life, but sold his daughter for his son-in-law's sake; and as he was coming home with the money, he lay in wait for him and killed him as you see. That was the money he stole, and as long as there is a Heaven above us, such money can surely be of no use. And there is neither God nor Buddha if this robber and parricide escapes unpunished. Strike this undutiful fellow with your swords and kill him inch by inch, sirs. I cannot control my anger.

RECITATIVE. She throws herself on the floor and weeps. Astonished at these words, the two men take their swords and press upon either side of Kanpei.

YAGORO. Kanpei, I did not tell you to atone for your offence with money got unjustly and with cruelty. It would be useless to speak of the way of knighthood to an inhuman fellow like you. The felon who murders his father-in-law whom he should treat like his own father and robs him of his money, deserves to be spitted with a spear. I will take the duty upon myself.

RECITATIVE. And he glares upon him.

GOEMON. Righteous men are warned that even in thirst they should not drink of the robber's spring. Can the money you stole by murdering your father-in-law be spent in our lord's cause? Marvellous is Yuranosuke's penetration when he rejected your money since he saw it was obtained by you who are by nature disloyal and faithless. But what we most deplore is that this matter will become known in the world; and when it is reported that Hayano Kanpei, a retainer of Enya Hangwan, did a most inhuman and cruel deed, it will not only be a shame to yourself, but it will be a stain upon our lord's fair name. Fool that you are, did you not know as much? You were not formerly so lacking in understanding; what devil has now entered into your heart?

RECITATIVE. Tears float in his keen eyes. Kanpei can no longer endure it when he is thus pressed with these clear reasonings, and baring his shoulders, he draws his dirk and instantly plunges it into his bowels.

KANPEI. Ah, I am ashamed to appear before you. I was prepared to kill myself if

my desire could not be attained. Since the murder of my father-in-law will, you say, be a stain upon our lord's name, I will tell you all. Hear me, gentlemen. Last night, on my way home after meeting Master Yagoro, I came across a wild boar in the dark running on the hill, and I sent two shots after it. I ran up to it and groped for it, and found that I had killed, not a boar, but a traveller. Great Heavens, thought I, I have made a terrible mistake! I felt in his bosom for some medicine, and caught hold of a pouch with this money in it. It was not right, I knew, but I felt that Heaven had given me the money; and so I ran off at once and handed it to Master Yagoro. And when I came home, I found that it was my father-in-law that I had killed and the money was the price of my wife's virtue. When everything I do thus goes awry like the cross-bill's beak, it shows that Kanpei's knightly fortune has come to an end. Oh, sympathise with me, gentlemen.

RECITATIVE. There are tears of mortification in his blood-shot eyes. On hearing

his account, Yagoro stands up, and turning the dead body round, he examines the wound.

YAGORO. Master Goemon, look at this. Though it looks like a gunshot wound, it is a cut made by scooping with a sword. Ah, you have acted rashly, Kanpei.

RECITATIVE. The wounded man looks up with a start, and the mother, too, is astonished.

GOEMON. That reminds me, Master Senzaki. As you yourself saw, we came upon a traveller lying dead with a gunshot wound on our way hither. Upon nearer approach, we found he was Ono Sadakuro, the villain whom even his avaricious father, Kudayu, had to disown. It was said that having nowhere to go, he had turned a highwayman. There is no doubt that the murderer of Kanpei's father-in-law was no other than he.

MOTHER. What, was it then somebody else that murdered the old man?

RECITATIVE. The mother clings to Kanpei.

MOTHER. See, I clasp my hands to you and entreat you. It was all my fault that

I should have abused you from my old complaining heart. Please, forgive me, Kanpei, and do not, do not die.

RECITATIVE. As she entreats with tears, he raises his head.

KANPEI. Now my mother's suspicions are dispelled and my name is cleared. I will take this thought with me to the other world and overtaking my father-in-law, accompany him over the Mountain of Death and across the Three-streamed River.

RECITATIVE. He plunges his dirk deeper and turns it round.

GOEMON. Ah, wait a while. That you revenged your father-in-law's death without knowing it, shows that your knightly fortune is not yet at an end. By the mercy of the God of War, you have done a meritorious deed, Kanpei, and there is something I wish to show you secretly while you breathe.

RECITATIVE. He takes a scroll from his bosom and deftly unrolls it.

GOEMON. This is the covenant signed by the confederates who have sworn to slay our lord's enemy, Kono Moronao.

RECITATIVE. Before he has done reading it, Kanpei calls out in his agony.

KANPEI. What are their names?

GOEMON. We are forty-five in all. Since we have seen your spirit, we will add your name and then we shall be forty-six. Take this as a souvenir to the other world.

RECITATIVE. He takes out an ink-and-brush case from his bosom and writes down Kanpei's name.

GOEMON. Seal it with your blood, Kanpei.

KANPEI. Right willingly.

RECITATIVE. He cuts his belly in a cross and pulling out his entrails, presses them under his name.

KANPEI. Now I have sealed it with my blood. Ah, how glad, how thankful I am! My desire is attained. Mother, do not lament, I pray you. Neither my father-in-law's death nor my wife's service has been in vain. Please, take this money for our confederates' use.

RECITATIVE. With tears the mother places before the two men the two packages of money and the pouch.

MOTHER. This pouch into which Kanpei's

spirit has entered, please, look upon it as my son-in-law and let it accompany you when you go to attack the enemy.

GOEMON. Yes, that is a natural request.

RECITATIVE. Goemon takes the money.

GOEMON. Now enter into Buddhist happiness.

KANPEI. Buddhist happiness! Loathsome are the words. I will not die, no, I will not die. My spirit shall remain on earth and follow the attack upon our enemy.

RECITATIVE. He speaks now with agony. The mother is bathed in tears.

MOTHER. I wish I could, Kanpei, let my daughter know of this and see you once more before you die.

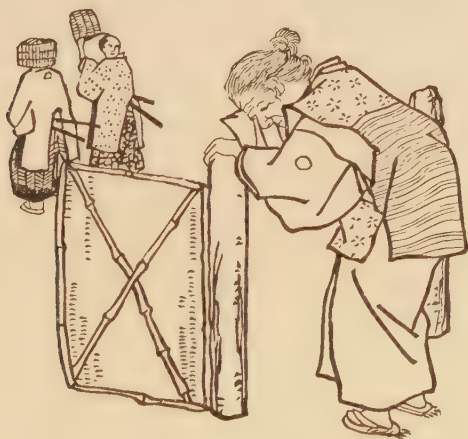
KANPEI. No, mother. Her father's death she may know of, but of mine never a word, I beg. The wife who was sold for her lord's sake, if she should, on hearing of this, neglect her service, it would be the same as if she were disloyal to her lord. Only leave it as it is. I have now nothing I regret to leave behind.

RECITATIVE. With the tip of his dirk he

pierces his throat and, falling forward, he dies.

MOTHER. What, are you dead already, my son? Ah, is there in this world another as luckless as I? My husband is dead, my son-in-law to whom I turned for help, has gone before me, and my dearest daughter lives separated from me. This aged mother who is left alone behind, ah, how can she remain alive? O husband, Yoichibei, please, take me with you.

RECITATIVE. She flings herself upon the body and cries. Again she stands up.



MOTHER. O my son, I will go with you.

RECITATIVE. She clings to the body and

sinks on the floor. She weeps there and here she weeps. With a loud cry she sinks and laments at the top of her voice. It is a sight pitiful to behold. Goemon stands up.

GOEMON. Come, old mother, it is natural that you should cry ; but Master Oboshi will be highly pleased when I tell him in detail how Kanpei died and hand the money he has offered. This money which I have here round my neck, a hundred *ryo* in all, I give you to offer prayers and hold services for the repose of the souls of your husband and son-in-law. Now, farewell, fare you well.

RECITATIVE. Tears in the eyes that gaze on and tears in the eyes that look back, they part, alas, in a flood of tears.

ACT VII.

ACT VII.

RECITATIVE.

Would you amuse yourself with flowers, gather the fair ones of Gion. There, to the east, south, north, and west, it shines as brightly as if the Amida's Paradise were gilded over and over again. The bright array of dancers and other women would deprive the genteelest of his senses and make him no better than a dunce.

(Enter Ono Kudayu and Sagisaka Bannai).

KUDAYU. Please, show me in. Is not the host in? Host, host.

HOST. How busy I am kept! What fellow is it? Who is the gentleman? Ah, Master Ono Kudayu! You asking to be shown in, why, you surprise me.

KUDAYU. No, I have brought a gentleman who comes here for the first time. You appear to be in great bustle. Have you a room that I can take the gentleman into?

HOST. Oh, yes, sir. The wealthy Mr.

Yura has this evening had all the well-known women brought together so that the rooms on the ground floor are completely occupied ; but the out-room is vacant.

KUDAYU. That, I suppose, is full of cobwebs.

HOST. There you are, sarcastic as usual.

KUDAYU. No, I mean that at my age I must take care not to be caught in women's toils.

HOST. Now that is too much. I cannot leave you down here ; and so up the stairs with you. Hi, waitresses, bring lights, wine-cups, and tobacco-trays.

RECITATIVE. As he calls out in a loud voice, the sounds of drums and *samisen** are heard within.

KUDAYU. What do you think, Master Bannai ? Do you see how Yuranosuke is carrying on ?

BANNAI. Master Kudayu, I think he must be mad. Though we received many private reports from you, even my master Moronao did not believe he was so far gone as that

The Japanese three-st ringed guitar.

and told me to come up to the Capital and inquire, and to let him know at once if there was any cause for suspicion. Well, well, I am now quite convinced that you were right. And his son Rikiya, what has become of him?

KUDAYU. The fellow comes here sometimes and is as dissipated as his father. What puzzles me is that they feel no reserve before each other. I came here this evening determined to get to the very bottom of the affair. I will speak to you privately. Now, let us go upstairs.

BANNAI. After you.

KUDAYU. Then, come this way.

RECITATIVE. A song is heard within.

“Though your heart is cold to me,
Your lips that move in sweet pretence
of love

Are adept in flattery.”

*(Enter Yazama Jutaro, Senzaki Yagoro,
and Takemori Kitahachi).*

JUTARO. Master Yagoro and Master Kitahachi, this is the tea-house Ichiriki, where Master Yuranosuke takes his pleasure. Oh, Heiyemon, we will call you when the time comes. Go and wait in the kitchen.

HEIYEMON. Yes, sir. I beg you will speak for me.

JUTARO. Will some one please come to the door?

WAITRESS. Yes, sir; and who are you?

JUTARO. Oh, we have come on business to Master Yuranosuke. Go in and tell him that we are Yazama Jutaro, Senzaki Yagoro, and Takemori Kitahachi; that though we sent messengers several times asking him to come to us, he would not return home and so we have all three repaired hither and beg him to see us as we have something on which we must consult him. Please, do not forget to tell him.

WAITRESS. Then I am sorry for you, for he has kept drinking since the third of the moon and even if you saw him, you will find he is not in his senses. His usual spirit is gone.

JUTARO. Do you hear that, Master Yagoro?

YAGORO. Yes, I hear and am astonished. I thought at first that it was a scheme to put the enemy off the scent; but now he gives himself too much to pleasures and I cannot understand it.

KITAHACHI. Is it not as I said? Has not his spirit changed completely? Let us break into his room and.....

YAGORO. No, no, let us first speak to him.

KITAHACHI. Very well; then we will wait here.

JUTARO. Well, but please say to him as I told you.



WAITRESS. Yes, sir.

WOMEN. Come where I clap my hands ;
here I clap them.

YURANOSUKE. I'll catch you ; I'll catch
you.

WOMEN. Not yet, not yet, Blindman
Yura.

YURANOSUKE. I'll catch you and make
you drink. Here, I've caught you. Now for
wine. Bring the wine-holder.

JUTARO. No, Master Yuranosuke, I am
Yazama Jutaro. What are you going to do ?

YURANOSUKE. Great Heavens, I have made
a mistake !

WOMAN. Oh, we are sorry. What fierce-
looking samurai they are, Miss Sakae ! Are
they his friends ?

SAKAE. I suppose so. They all look very
dreadful.

JUTARO. Ah, you women. We have come
on business to Master Oboshi, and we should
like you to leave us for a while.

WOMAN. I thought it would be so.

SAKAE. Master Yura, we will go in, and
you will come soon. We leave you, sirs.

JUTARO. Master Yuranosuke, I am Yazama Jutarō.

KITAHACHI. And I, Takemori Kitahachi.

YAGORO. And I, Senzaki Yagoro, wait upon you. Are you now awake?

YURANOSUKE. You are all welcome, gentlemen. And why.....

JUTARO. When shall we start for Kamakura?

YURANOSUKE. Well, then it is an important thing you come to ask me. Says the song in *Tamba no Yosaku* :* “When you go to the City of Yedo.....” Ha, ha, ha! Pardon me; I am talking foolishly.

JUTARO. No, wine reveals a man’s true character. If you are not in your right senses, we three will make you sober.

HEIYEMON. Oh, do not act rashly. As I should like, by your leave, to say a few words, pray, wait a while. Master Yuranosuke, I am Teraoka Heiyemon. It gives me great joy to see Your Honour in such excellent health.

*A play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the greatest of Japanese dramatists (1653—1724).

YURANOSUKE. Humph, Teraoka Heiyemon? Ah, yes. You are the light-footed *ashigaru**, who was sent on an errand to the North?

HEIYEMON. The same, sir. When I heard in the North of our lord's death, I was amazed and hurried home on wings; but on the way I was told that his domain had been confiscated and his retainers dispersed, and great was my indignation. Though I am but an *ashigaru*, I am bound no less than others in gratitude to our lord. I went to Kamakura to cut down at a stroke his enemy Moronao; for three months I disguised myself as an outcast and prowled after him; but he was so well guarded that I could not approach him. I felt I could only disembowel myself; but I thought of my parents in my country home and thither I trudged in deep dejection. And then—surely it was Heaven that told me—I heard that you gentlemen had signed a covenant for the league. How glad, how thankful I was! Leaving every-

*The *ashigaru* were a grade lower than the samurai; and in war they were common soldiers.

thing behind me, I ran to these gentlemen's inn and begged them to intercede for me. They called me a brave fellow, a fine fellow, and promised to plead for me to the Chief. And relying upon their words, I have followed them to-day. Moronao's mansion.....

YURANOSUKE. Ah, wait, wait. Why, you are not light of foot, but very, very light of tongue. Why do you not become a jester? Well, I did feel indignant in a slight degree and form a league of forty or fifty men. But what of that? I pondered upon it. If we fail, off our heads will go; and if we succeed, we must cut our bellies. Either way there was but death for us; it was like taking a decoction and then hanging ourselves. As for you, you are an *ashigaru* with a salary of five *ryo* and three men's rations. Now do not be angry. For you who received no more than a dole we might give to a begging priest, to throw away your life for vengeance upon our enemy, why, you might as well give a grand dancing performance in return for a present of a few seaweeds. My stipend was fifteen hundred *koku*; and compared with

you, I might take the enemy's heads by the bushel and yet not be on a level with you. And so we gave it up. Do you see? Such is the way of the world. And when I hear music going *tsutsuten, tsutsuten, tsutsuten*, I can hardly contain myself.

HEIYEMON. I cannot imagine that these are Your Honour's words. To me who received only three men's rations and yourself with fifteen hundred *koku*, the life that keeps us in this world is the same, and there is no difference in our gratitude to our lord. But what we cannot disregard is the lineage. I know it is rude, it is impudent for a fellow of no worth like me to beg to be allowed to join gentlemen of rank who were qualified to act as our lord's deputy. I should be like a monkey mimicking a man; but I will carry your sandals, your boxes, or anything, if only you will take me with you. I entreat you, sir; please, Your Honour, Your Honour. What, he appears to have fallen asleep.

KITAHACHI. Come, Heiyemon, do not waste more words; for Yuranosuke is as good as dead. Master Yazama, Master Sen-

zaki, we have now seen his true spirit, and let us act as we agreed.

YAGORO. Yes, as a warning to our confederates. Are you ready?

RECITATIVE. As they close in, Heiyemon stays their hands and approaches them.

HEIEMON. Pray, stop a moment, sirs. As I turn it over and over in my mind, it seems to me that the many difficulties he has encountered in his wish to avenge his lord's death after he parted from him and his indignation at people's slanders when anxiety besets him on all sides, these he has borne in silence, and he could not under these burdens have lived on till now if he had not kept drinking. Take your measures when he has become sober again.

RECITATIVE. He stops them against their will and accompanies them within. Their shadows disappear behind the well-lighted sliding-screens.

One *ri* and a half westward from Yamashina runs Yuranosuke's son Rikiya, all breathless; and peeping within, he sees his father lying asleep unconscious of all around him.

If he calls him, he will be heard by others ; and so coming close to his pillow, he gently strikes his sword-guard against the hilt. Suddenly Yuranosuke rises.

YURANOSUKE. Oh, is it you, Rikiya ? Did you sound the sword-guard because you have urgent business ? Quietly, speak quietly.



RIKIYA. An express messenger has just brought a secret letter from Lady Kaoyo.

YURANOSUKE. Was there no verbal message, besides?

RIKIYA. Our enemy Kono Moronao's application for permission to return to his province has been granted and he will shortly start for home. The message added that the particulars would be found in the letter.

YURANOSUKE. Very well. You will go home and send a palanquin for me in the night. Now, go.

RECITATIVE. Without a moment's hesitation, he runs back towards Yamashina. Anxious to see what the letter might say, Yuranosuke is about to open it, when Kudayu calls to him.

KUDAYU. Master Oboshi, Master Yura, it is Ono Kudayu. I wish to see you.

YURANOSUKE. Ah, it is a long, long time; we have not met for a year, and have grown old, very old. Have you come here to stretch out those wrinkles on your forehead? Oh, you old reprobate!

KUDAYU. Master Yura, in a great deed, they say, little defects are overlooked. Your dissipation here in defiance of evil tongues

will be the foundation of your great deed. I think you a fine man of great promise.

YURANOSUKE. Ha, ha, you drive me hard, hard as a catapult. But leave it alone.

KUDAYU. No, Master Yuranosuke, don't sham. Your dissipation really looks like a scheme to attack the enemy.

YURANOSUKE. You surprise me. But thank you. I thought you would laugh at me as a fool and a madman for taking to pleasures when I am over forty years of age; but no, you look upon it as a scheme to attack the enemy. Master Kudayu, I am delighted.

KUDAYU. Have you, then, no intention of avenging our lord's death?

YURANOSUKE. Not a jot, not a jot. When we handed over the mansion and the domain, I said I would die fighting in the castle; but that was only said to please Lady Kaoyo. You left the room at the time, saying that we were acting like rebels to the Shogun; and after that, we swaggered on, fools that we were; but we could not come to a decision. We said we would slay ourselves before our lord's tomb, and we stole out by the back

gate. It is entirely owing to you that I am now enjoying these gay pleasures. I do not forget our old friendship. Don't be so formal, but be more at ease.

KUDAYU. Yes, as I think of it, I, too, was a hypocrite in the old days. I will show my true nature and drink with you. Come, Master Yura, it is a long time since we drank together. Give me your cup; are you going to ask it back as they do at parties? Go on pouring and I'll drink, and go on drinking and I'll pour. Accept this fish that I am going to give you.

RECITATIVE. He takes up a piece of octopus that he sees beside him and places it before Yuranosuke.

YURANOSUKE. I put out my hand to receive the octopus' foot. Thank you.

RECITATIVE. As he raises it to his head and is about to eat it, Kudayu takes hold of his hand.

KUDAYU. Hear me, Master Yuranosuke; to-morrow will be the anniversary of our Lord Enya Hangwan's demise. They say that the eve of that day should be especially kept

holy; and yet will you eat this fish without hesitation?

YURANOSUKE. Yes, certainly. Or is it that you have had tidings that our Lord Enya has turned into an octopus? What a querulous man you are, to be sure! You and I are *ronin* now because of Lord Enya's indiscretion. I may bear him grudge; but I have not the least wish to abstain from animal food on his account. I eat with great pleasure the fish you are good enough to give me.

RECITATIVE. And he coolly eats it at a mouthful; and the crafty Kudayu is so astonished that he remains speechless.

YURANOSUKE. With such poor fish we cannot drink. We will have a fowl killed and broiled. Come with me within and we will make the women sing.

RECITATIVE. He goes staggering in exhilaration. Music is heard within.

YURANOSUKE. You little vixens, see if I don't make you drunk.

RECITATIVE. Amid the noise he goes in. Sagisaka Bannai, who has been watching the whole time, comes downstairs.

BANNAI. Master Kudayu, I have been carefully observing. From one who does not refrain from animal food on the anniversary of his master's death, revenge is not to be dreamt of. I will report it to my master Moronao and make him open the gates that he keeps strictly guarded.

KUDAYU. Yes, there is no longer need for guard. See, he has forgotten his sword.

BANNAI. Indeed ! it truly proves what a great fool he is. Let us look at this soul of a samurai. Why, it is rusted all over.

KUDAYU. Ha, ha, ha ! It shows his true nature more clearly still ; and you may now rest at ease. Let Kudayu's servants bring his palanquin.

RECITATIVE. They bring the palanquin.

KUDAYU. Now, Master Bannai, please, get in.

BANNAI. You are old ; please, get in.

KUDAYU. Then, by your leave.

RECITATIVE. He gets in.

BANNAI. By the bye, Master Kudayu, I hear Kanpei's wife is in service here. Do you not know her ? Master Kudayu, Master Kudayu.

RECITATIVE. He receives no answer.

BANNAI. This is strange!

RECITATIVE. He lifts the screen of the palanquin and sees inside a fair-sized stepping-stone.

BANNAI. What is this? Has Kudayu turned into a Matsura* Sayo-hime?



RECITATIVE. As he looks around, he hears a voice from under the verandah.

KUDAYU. Here, Master Bannai. I have slipped out of the palanquin, because the letter

*When her lord, Satehiko, left on an expedition to Korea, Sayo-hime stood on a high rock and waved her sleeves to his vessel. She remained there so long that she was turned into stone.

that Rikiya brought a while ago makes me uneasy. I will watch and let you know afterwards. Do you walk by the palanquin as if I were still in it.

BANNAI. Very well.

RECITATIVE. He nods and slowly walks by the palanquin as if there were some one in it. On the upper floor appears Okaru, Kanpei's wife, to cool her flushed face. She is already used to her new life, and she cheers her spirits in the breeze that blows towards her.

YURANOSUKE. I shall come back directly. I, a samurai, have forgotten to bring my precious sword. While I am away, hang straight the *kakemono* and put some charcoal in the brazier.

OKARU. Oh, take care, you must not tread on that *samisen* there and break it.

YURANOSUKE. Dear me, Kudayu appears to have gone.

RECITATIVE. A song is heard within.

"Some one calls out close to his ear.

'O father mine and mother dear.'

He looks around in great surprise,

And, lo, a parrot meets his eyes.

It was his wife that taught the bird
To speak the tender words he heard."

RECITATIVE. Yu-
ranosuke looks around
and, by the light of the
hanging lantern, he
reads Lady Kaoyo's
letter which tells in
detail the enemy's con-
dition. Being a wom-



an's letter with many re-
dundant phrases he cannot
read it quickly. Thinking
with envy that it is a letter
from some loved woman,
Okaru looks down; but she
cannot distinguish the char-
acters in the dim light.
She thinks of her metal
mirror; and bringing it out,
she reads the letter by its
reflection. Little dreams Yu-
ranosuke, being no god, that

under the verandah Kudayu is reading the same letter by the moonlight as it unrolls and hangs down. Okaru's hair-pin comes loose and falls on the ground. At the sound Yuranosuke looks up and hides the letter behind him; under the verandah Kudayu is still in smiles; and on the upper floor Okaru conceals her mirror.

OKARU. Is it you, Master Yura?

YURANOSUKE. And you, Okaru? What are you doing there?

OKARU. You gave me so much to drink and I feel so dizzy that I came here to cool myself in the breeze and drive away the effects.

YURANOSUKE. Oh, Okaru, I have something to say to you. With you over there, we are as if on the opposite sides of the Milky Way* and I cannot speak to you from here. Will you not come down for a moment?

OKARU. What you want to tell me, is it something you wish to ask?

YURANOSUKE. Well, something of the sort.

*An allusion to a popular legend of the Stars Vega and Altair on the opposite sides of the Milky Way.

OKARU. I will come round.

YURANOSUKE. No, no. If you go round by the stairs, the waitresses will catch you and make you drink again.

OKARU. What shall I do?

YURANOSUKE. Oh, see, happily here is a nine-runged ladder. Please, come down by it.

RECITATIVE. He leans it against the eaves of the lower floor.

OKARU. This ladder is not of the ordinary make. Oh, I am afraid. Somehow it looks dangerous.

YURANOSUKE. Never mind, never mind. In the old days you might have been afraid or shrunk away from a ladder. But now you are old enough to come down three steps at a time.

OKARU. Don't talk foolishly. It feels like being in a boat; I am afraid. If you will not keep quiet, I will not come down.

YURANOSUKE. If you will not, I will bring you down.

OKARU. Oh, there you are again at your tricks!

YURANOSUKE. You are noisy as a little miss. I will catch you from behind.

RECITATIVE. He catches her from behind and puts her on the ground.

YURANOSUKE. Now, did you see anything?

OKARU. Oh, n-n-no.

YURANOSUKE. I am sure you saw.

OKARU. Yes, something that looked like an interesting letter.

YURANOSUKE. Did you read it all from over there?

OKARU. Oh, how tiresome!

YURANOSUKE. Then your life is in danger.

OKARU. What are you talking of?

YURANOSUKE. What I am talking of, Okaru? Though it is a stale thing to say, I am in love with you. Will you not be my wife?

OKARU. Oh, stop. That is not true.

YURANOSUKE. Well, truth will not take root unless it comes out of falsehood. Say you will be my wife.

OKARU. No, I will not.

YURANOSUKE. Why not?

OKARU. Because what you say is not truth that comes out of falsehood, but falsehood that is founded on truth.

YURANOSUKE. Okaru, I will redeem you.

OKARU. What?

YURANOSUKE. To prove that it is not a falsehood, I will buy you out this very night.

OKARU. But I have a

YURANOSUKE. If you have a lover, I will let you marry him.

OKARU. But are you in earnest?

YURANOSUKE. It is the samurai's benevolence. After I have kept you by me for three days, you may do as you please.

OKARU. Ah, how glad I am! I believe when you have made me say that, you are going to laugh at me.

YURANOSUKE. No, I will go and pay your master at once and settle the matter this moment. So do not be anxious, but wait here for me.

OKARU. Then, I will wait for you.

YURANOSUKE. While I go and pay the money, be sure you do not move from this spot. You are now my wife.

OKARU. And that too, only for three days.

YURANOSUKE. Yes, I know.

(*Yuranosuke goes in*).

OKARU. I am grateful to you.

RECITATIVE. A song is heard within.

“If e’er was ill-starr’d maid,
That maid I am, surely ;

For days and days I think
Of my dearest lover,

With muffled cries at night

Like the lonely plover.”

Okaru is sunk in thought as she feels how fitly the song describes her own position. Here Heiyemon comes in and meets her.

HEIYEMON. Are you not my sister ?

OKARU. Oh, is it you, brother ? I am ashamed to be seen here.

RECITATIVE. She hides her face.

HEIYEMON. There is no cause for shame. When I came back from the Eastern Provinces, I saw our mother and heard it all. You bravely sold yourself for your husband and for our lord. Well done, sister.

OKARU. I am glad if you think so kindly of me. But rejoice with me. To-night, though I did not expect it, I am to be redeemed.

HEIYEMON. That is excellent. And by whom?

OKARU. By one whom you know, Master Oboshi Yuranosuke.

HEIYEMON. What, by Master Yuranosuke? You have long been intimate?

OKARU. No, not at all. I have lately waited on him twice or thrice when he drank, and that was all. He says, if I have a husband, he will let me join him, and if I want to leave him, he will let me go. It is almost too good to be true.

HEIYEMON. Then, does he know that you are Kanpei's wife?

OKARU. No, he does not know it. As it would be shame to my parents and husband, how could I tell him?

HEIYEMON. Humph, then, he is a libertine from his heart. It is certain that he has no wish to revenge his lord.

OKARU. Oh, but he has, brother. I cannot say it aloud. I will whisper it to you.

RECITATIVE. She whispers to him.

HEIYEMON. Humph, you really read the letter?

OKARU. I read it to the end. Then we looked at each other, face to face, and he began to banter me, and at last he talked of redeeming me.

HEIYEMON. After you had read the whole letter?

OKARU. Yes.

HEIYEMON. I see now. Sister, your life is doomed; give it to me.

RECITATIVE. And he draws his sword and strikes at her; but she springs aside.

OKARU. O brother, what have I done? As I have my husband Kanpei and my two parents, you cannot do as you will with me. All my pleasure now is to be redeemed and see once more my parents and husband. Whatever I may have done, I will ask your pardon. Forgive me, pardon me.

RECITATIVE. As she clasps her hands to him, Heiyemon flings away his sword and, throwing himself down, sinks into tears of bitter sorrow.

HEIYEMON. My poor, poor sister, then, you know nothing? Our father Yoichibei was

struck down and murdered on the night of the twenty-ninth day of the sixth moon.

OKARU. Heavens, and how ?

HEIYEMON. There is something more to startle you. Kanpei, whom you think to join when you are redeemed, has disembowelled himself and died.

OKARU. What ? Is it true ? Is it, is it, tell me ?

RECITATIVE. She clings to him and with a loud cry, sinks into bitter tears.

HEIYEMON. It is natural, very natural that you should cry. It will take too long to tell you in full. I feel most sorry for our mother. She speaks of it and cries, and then she thinks of it and cries again. She feared that if you heard of it, you would cry yourself to death, and told me not to say a word of it to you. I did not think to tell you ; but now you cannot escape death. For Master Yuranosuke, who is the very embodiment of loyalty, has no cause to redeem you if he does not know that you are Kanpei's wife ; and he certainly is not infatuated with love. Of grave import was the letter you

saw ; and I am sure that he means to put you to death when he has redeemed you. Even though you should not tell of the letter, walls have ears, and if its contents came to light through others, it would be attributed to your blabbing. It was your fault to have peeped into the secret letter ; and you must be killed. Rather than you should fall by another's hand, I would put you to death myself. A woman who has knowledge of the great plot, you cannot be allowed to escape though you are my sister. On the strength of that deed, I will join the leaguers and accompany them on their journey. Ah, sad is the lot of a man of low estate ; for he cannot, unless he shows a spirit superior to others, be counted among them. Hearken to me and give me your life ; please, die, dear sister.

RECITATIVE. Hearing these clear words of her brother, Okaru sobs again and again.

OKARU. I thought I had no tidings from Kanpei because he had started on his journey by making use of the money, the price of my service, and I have been angry because I thought he might have come to bid me fare-

well. Though I am wrong to say it, our father, sad as was his death, was still of ripe age; but Kanpei—to die when he was hardly thirty years old, how sad, how mortified he must have been and how must he have longed to see me! Why was I not allowed to see him? Not to abstain from animal food in memory of my father and husband, it was my evil fortune. Why should I wish to live? If I die by your hand, our mother will be offended with you. I will kill myself; and afterwards if my head or body be of service to you, make what use you please of it. Now farewell, dear brother.

RECITATIVE. With these words she takes up the sword; but a voice cries out:

A VOICE. Nay, wait a moment.

(Enter Yuranosuke).

RECITATIVE. He who stops her is Yuranosuke. Heiyemon is startled. Okaru cries out as Yuranosuke holds her hand.

OKARU. Oh, let go. Let me die.

RECITATIVE. He still holds her hands tightly.

YURANOSUKE. You brother and sister,

your conduct is admirable. My doubts are dispelled. The brother shall accompany me to the East, and the sister shall survive and offer prayers for his soul.

OKARU. No, I will say those prayers as I accompany him to the other world.

RECITATIVE. As she tries to snatch away the sword, he holds it tightly over her hand.

YURANOSUKE. Though your husband Kanpei has joined the league, he has not killed a single enemy and will have no plea to make when he meets his lord in the other world. That plea shall be found here.

RECITATIVE. And he thrusts the sword which Okaru still holds between the mats through the floor, and Kudayu, whose shoulder is pierced as he hides under it, writhes with pain.

YURANOSUKE. Drag him out.

RECITATIVE. Instantly Heiyemon jumps off the verandah upon the ground and drags out by force the blood-stained Kudayu.

HEIYEMON. What, Kudayu? Well, you are rightly served.

RECITATIVE. He drags him forward and

throws him down before Yuranosuke, who catches him by the hair ere he can rise and pulls him towards him.

YURANOSUKE. The worm that feeds in the lion's body is such as you. You received a high salary from our lord and great favours as well; and yet you became his enemy Moronao's spy and reported to him everything, were it true or false. We, forty men and more, have left our parents, parted from our children, and sent our wives who should be our life-long companions to lead a life of shame, all, all to revenge our lord's death; and awaking or asleep, we ponder ever upon the circumstances of his suicide and weep tears of despair in the anguish of our hearts. To-night, of all others, the eve of the anniversary of our lord's death when we must abstain from all unclean food and I have endeavoured with the utmost effort not even to utter an impure word, you dared to thrust the flesh of fish to my face; how great was my agony when I durst not refuse and yet could not accept it! How do you imagine I felt when it went down my throat on this eve of the

anniversary of my lord whose family mine has served for many generations? My whole body seemed all at once to go to pieces and my bones to break every one. You devil, you hound of hell!

RECITATIVE. He presses and pushes his head on the ground and sinks into tears of despair.

YURANOSUKE. Here, Heiyemon, my forgetting to take that rusty sword of mine



was a presage that I should torture this fellow to death with it. Torture him without killing him.

HEIYEMON. Very well, sir.

RECITATIVE. No sooner does he draw the sword than he jumps and flies at Kudayu and cuts him about; but the gashes are only a few inches long. He strikes him until no part of his body is left unwounded.

KUDAYU. Heiyemon, Okaru, plead for me.

RECITATIVE. He clasps his hands to them. How unsightly is it for him to bow and entreat Teraoka, whom formerly he despised as an *ashigaru*!

YURANOSUKE. If we kill him here, it will be difficult to explain it away. Pretend he is drunk and take him home.

RECITATIVE. His *haori* is thrown upon him to hide his wounds. Here Yazama, Senzaki, and Takemori, who have been listening in secret, suddenly open the sliding-door.

ALL THREE. Master Yuranosuke, we humbly apologise for our conduct.

YURANOSUKE. Here, Heiyemon, let this drunken guest take a bath in the River Kamo.

HEIYEMON. Yes, sir.

YURANOSUKE. Go.

ACT VIII.

ACT VIII.

THE BRIDAL JOURNEY.

Who was it sang,

“ This world is like the As’ka River,

For all things change for ever ;

There where the deep pool was yestreen,

A shoal to-day is seen”?

The pool has changed to a shoal, and he who received a stipend is now a *ronin* with no place to turn to. Through Enya’s fault, Konami, the daughter of Kakogawa, though still linked by love, is deserted by her affianced husband before the exchange of betrothal presents. She is given to moody thoughts, and her mother resolves to go with her to Yamashina and give her in marriage to her lover Chikara. Bearing in mind his present condition, when the mother and daughter

In this Act, such frequent allusions are made to the different places on the highroad from Yedo to Kyoto that, without the knowledge of their names, it is well-nigh impossible to make much meaning out of the whole piece.

bend their steps towards the Capital, they neither take a waiting-woman nor ride in a palanquin. Konami's snowy-white complexion is tinged in the cold air with the light red of the winter plum-blossom; and the tips of her fingers are frozen as she reaches Kogoezaka (Frozen Steep) and climbs up the Satta Pass. As she looks back, the snow-dust vanishes from Mount Fuji*; but her uneasiness, as she thinks her fate will be like it, will soon be set at rest by the fire to be lighted



at her wedding. With these joyful reflections she comes upon the pine-grove of Miho; after it is an avenue of pine-trees, which is now

*Refers to an ode by Saigyo-hoshi (1118-1190).

filled by a great procession. Who the lord is she knows not, but she looks at it with envy; ah, if the times had not changed, in such grand state might she have travelled for her marriage. With these dreams of pageantry she passes Fuchu, and when the castle-town is left behind, her mother, to cheer their spirits, looks forward impatiently to the moment when the wedding cups are exchanged and all is still but for the whisperings of the bridal chamber which the daughter will keep secret from the mother. The ivy-covered path leads from the sea-coast where the lashing billows separate parent and child; and here in the tangled path her mother takes her hand and asks her how glad she will be to meet her lover. She pushes aside her mother's swords at the Mariko River, and near Utsu Hill she is lost in reverie, thinking of her bridegroom. The coloured rice at Seto is hard; and so may be her life, though now she is full of bashful joy. At the Oi River an anxiety arises; for the stream of water and a man's heart are fickle, they say. Will his heart ever change? As well

ask if the flower will bloom in the shade.
At Shimada*, that home of maiden coiffure,



her brooding ceases. Asking herself in a murmur if people know how she is placed, she crosses the bridge at Shirasuka, and further on, at Yoshida and Akasaka, the women of the inns in a loud voice invite the passers-by. "If you would seek a mate," they sing, "go to the Temple of Kiyomizu, plunge into the Falls of Otowa, and pray for one every day. The dancers' drum has

* The formal coiffure of young unmarried women is called *shimada* after this town.

broken our midday nap." Oh, how she wishes to tell of her hardships to her husband in the Capital! If it is only the couple and the mother, the Goddess of Ise has brought them together; and the country song is a good omen to her. She comes to Narumi; ah, is that the Shrine of Atsuta over yonder? The boat has hoisted its sail on the seven-*ri* ferry and the boatmen keep time as they row. The sound of their steering, it is like the cry of the *suzu-mushi* (bell-insect); nay, it is sad and lonely as the cricket's chirp.* The boats are few in number, and so runs the mother, and runs the daughter. The hail falls from the sky, and they put up umbrellas with their fellow-passengers in the boat. Now they come to Shono and stop at Kameyama, where part the roads to Ise and to the East. The bells (*suzu*) of the postal road are heard at Suzukagoe,

* Refers to an ode by Gokyogoku (died 1190), which runs:—

Sweetly chirps in the frosty night
The lonely cricket at my side;
But lonelier far am I and cold,
With half my bed unoccupied.

and the rain falls at Tsuchiyama.* So they all say at Minakuchi. At Ishibe and Ishiba she picks up stones, big and little, and fondles and rubs them† as they remind her of her husband. In time they reach Otsu and cross the foot of the Temple of Miidera, and hurry to a village not far from Yamashina.

* Refers to a popular local song, which runs:—

At Seki, it is burning hot o'erhead

At Suzuka the clouds have spread;

And at Tsuchiyama, the half-way town,

The rain comes pouring down.

† Oboshi's real name is Ōishi, which means 'big stone'; hence the allusion.



ACT IX.

ACT IX.

RECITATIVE.

In Yamashina, which is neither elegant nor out-of-the-common and has nothing to recommend it, lies Yuranosuke's temporary home. Since yesterday he has remained at the tea-house in Gion; for last night he was kept in by snow and has come home this morning. Jesters and waitresses have come with him, and flushed with wine, he attempts to roll the snow; but instead of the snow rolling, he rolls in the snow, and he amuses himself heedless of all appearances.

A JESTER. Master, your parlour commands a fine view. The garden with the bamboos weighted with snow looks just like a picture; it is beautiful, is it not, Oshina?

OSHINA. Yes, when I see this view, I do not wish to go anywhere else.

YURANOSUKE. Er..... don't you know that
ode,

“When it is seen from morn to eve,
 E’en Awaji’s fair chain of hills
 Over ’gainst Sumiyoshi’s beach
 No more our eyes with wonder fills”?



Though a
 man may be
 proud of his
 garden, he
 cannot relish
 wine at
 home; it will
 not go down
 his throat.
 Now, come
 in, come in.
 Where is my

wife when I have visitors?

RECITATIVE. He goes before the others; and as he strides from one stepping-stone to another, his words are unsteady, and so are his legs, for he is exhilarated with wine. His wife, guessing that he has returned, comes out in a light spirit, and in her anxiety for her husband out in the cold, she shows no jealousy. With cheerful words she brings him

a cup of tea; but he takes only a sip and throws the rest on the ground.

YURANOSUKE. Ah, wife, that is clumsy of you. You wish me to become sober when I have had wine and enjoyed myself. How jealous must other people think you! Ah, how the snow has fallen! Snow is like whipped cotton, they say, and flying, is stuffed within; and the wife, when she is called *mamma*, becomes a household drudge.* Pardon the lateness of my visit to my lady's chamber. The spring lobster, the goblet, and the fence of the Rice-God of the Grotto must be red, or they will lose their votaries, I suppose. Dear, dear, I have stumbled and sprained my big toe. Oh, well, well. I will do so while I am about it.

OISHI. Oh, do not jest; be quiet. When he drinks too much, he loses his senses. What a trouble he must have been to you!

RECITATIVE. She speaks to them gently. Rikiya comes in.

*A parody on a famous couplet in a Chinese poem:
"Snow is like goose-feather, and flying, is scattered;
Man looks robed in the crane's plumage, and rising,
wanders about."

RIKIYA. Please, mother. Is father asleep? Pray, give him this.

RECITATIVE. From their actions it is plain that the parents and son understand one another; and when Rikiya hands a wooden pillow, Yuranosuke appears to be in a dream.

OISHI. Will you all now go home?

JESTERS. AND WAITRESSES. Yes, yes, madam. Pray, present compliments to Master. And come sometimes, Young Master.

RECITATIVE. They make signs with their eyes, and they go home with abashed looks. When they have gone beyond hearing, Yuranosuke raises his head.

YURANOSUKE. Rikiya, see this snow that I rolled when I pretended to amuse myself; it was done with an object in view. What do you make of it?

RIKIYA. Snow, sir, is scattered when it falls by the least wind; and yet, though it is light, it becomes, when it is pressed into a ball, as you see there, as hard as a stone, for rocks are split by snow that is blown down from a peak. Weighty is loyalty. But neither

that weighty loyalty nor this ball of snow must be kept too long. Is that your meaning, sir?

YURANOSUKE. No, no. Yuranosuke, his son, Hara Goemon, and the rest of the forty-seven confederates are all masterless and live in the shade. Snow, too, will not melt if it is kept in the shade; and it warns us against haste. It is in the sun here, take it into the yard behind the house. When they collected fireflies or piled snow* for light to read by, it showed the patience of scholars. Let the servant open the garden-gate from inside. I will write the letter to Sakai; when the messenger comes, let me know.

RECITATIVE. The servant opens the garden-gate; the snow is rolled in and the gate is shut. The sliding-door is opened and they all go in.

She who now comes to this retreat in Yamashina, as far removed from the world

*Refers to the stories of two Chinese scholars, Ch'e-yin, who collected fireflies and put them in a bag to read by their light, and Sun-K'ang, who read by the snow-light, as they were too poor to buy a lamp and oil.

as the recesses of the heart, is Tonase, the wife of Kakogawa Honzo Yukikuni. She makes the palanquin which has come with her wait near her; and alone she girds two swords and, strict in deportment, she calls at the door of the retreat.

TONASE. If you please.

RECITATIVE. Hearing her voice, the servant Rin slips off her *tasuki** and rushes to the door, which formerly would have been answered by an usher.

TONASE. Is this Master Oboshi Yuranosuke's home? If so, pray, tell him that I am Tonase, Kakogawa Honzo's wife; I have long neglected to call; but I have come a great distance to-day as there is something for which I desire to see him.

RECITATIVE. Then she turns round and makes the bearers bring the palanquin beside her. She calls her daughter. And with such a smile as smiles the bush-warbler when he flies out of the depths of the valley to find the plum-tree all a-flower, out comes Konami,

* A cord for tucking in the sleeves.

with a head-covering almost concealing her eyes.

KONAMI. Are we already at Master Rikiya's home? I feel too shy.

RECITATIVE. The room is put in order, and the servant comes to the door to bid them enter.

TONASE. The palanquin-bearers may now go home. Please, show us in.

RECITATIVE. Konami keeps close to her mother and sits down with her; and the next moment Oishi calmly enters to meet them.

OISHI. You ladies are welcome. I should have called long ago; but you have no doubt heard of our present condition, and I am ashamed to be visited in such a home.

TONASE. You are too formal. Though we see each other for the first time to-day, since your son, Master Rikiya and my daughter Konami were betrothed, you and I are now connections, and we need not stand upon ceremony to each other.

OISHI. It is very kind of you to say so. I am grateful for such an unexpected visit in this cold weather of Master Kakogawa

Honzo's lady who must be very busy. Mistress Tonase knows the Capital, no doubt; but it must be quite new to Mistress Konami. Have you been to Gion, Kiyomizu, Chion-in, and the Great Statue of Buddha? If you wish to see the Kinkakuji, I can procure you admittance.

RECITATIVE. To this unreserved talk Konami can only mutter a word or two in answer, as if the light dazzled her even through her head-covering. Tonase now sits up straight.

TONASE. I will tell you why I came here to-day. After this my daughter Konami was betrothed, came the calamity to your Lord Enya, and we could not discover where Master Yuranosuke and Master Rikiya dwelt. It is the way of the world to change with the times; but unchangeable is the parent's heart. Upon inquiry, we found that you lived here in Yamashina and, in our desire to make over our daughter to you as soon as possible, I have forced myself upon you to-day. My husband Honzo should have come in person; but as he is busy with his official duties, I

have girded myself with these two swords, the soul of my husband, and am therefore here as his deputy. I do duty for him and myself. I desire to see Master Yuranosuke also. I should like to see the marriage-cups exchanged and feel at ease. Happily, to-day is an auspicious day, and please, therefore, to make preparations for the marriage.

OISHI. Your words are most unexpected. Unfortunately, Yuranosuke has gone out; but if he were at home and saw you, he would answer, "I am most grateful for your kindness. When the children were betrothed, I was in my lord's service and received a stipend; I asked Master Honzo to give me his daughter and he consented, and the promise was made. But now I am a *ronin* with scarcely a servant; and though the promise was made, the daughter of one of Master Kogawa's high position would be out of place here; it would be, as the vulgar saying is, as ill-matched as a lantern and a temple-bell. An ill-sorted marriage can only end in a divorce. Besides, we have not exchanged betrothal presents, and so, pray give her away any-

where you please without the least reserve.” That, Madam, would be his answer.

TONASE. You surprise me. However much you may humble yourself, you cannot say that it is an ill match between Honzo and Master Yuranosuke. I will tell you why. My master is of a modest position, and his chief councillor Honzo receives only five hundred *koku*; while Lord Enya was a daimyo, and his chief councillor Master Yuranosuke’s stipend was fifteen hundred *koku*. Did you not make the betrothal when your stipend was a thousand *koku* higher than Honzo’s? And now you are a *ronin*, and even if you were without income, Honzo’s stipend would only be five hundred *koku* higher than yours.

OISHI. No, you are wrong. Though there might be a difference of not merely five hundred *koku*, but even of ten thousand, we would not object to taking for wife a great man’s daughter if only our hearts matched.

TONASE. I should like to hear more of this, Mistress Oishi. You say, if your hearts matched. Whose hearts, pray, tell me?

OISHI. My master Lord Enya Hangwan’s

death was due, it is true, to his hasty temper ; but it arose originally from his love of honesty. On the other hand, Master Honzo cajoled Moronao with bribe and receives the stipend of a fawning samurai. We cannot take for wife a woman who is an ill match for the beloved son of Yuranosuke who refuses to serve a second master.

RECITATIVE. Instantly Tonase shuffles forward.

TONASE. Whom do you mean by a fawning samurai? According to your answer, I may refuse to let it pass ; but I will overlook it for the love of my daughter. It is the wife's duty to submit to her husband. Whether the marriage ceremony has taken place or not, she is, since she has been betrothed to Rikiya, his wife in the eyes of all men.

OISHI. Humph, that is interesting. If she is his wife, her husband divorces her ; I divorce her in my son's name.

RECITATIVE. With these words she stands up and going out, shuts the sliding-door behind her. The daughter bursts out crying.

KONAMI. I came here relying upon your

promise to let me see Master Rikiya, to whom I was betrothed as we loved each other, and now his mother divorces me ; but I have done nothing to deserve it. Please, plead for me, mother, and let the marriage ceremony take place.

RECITATIVE. She clings to her mother and weeps ; and the mother gazes long at her face.

TONASE. It may be due to a parent's partiality ; but your beauty appears to me to be more than ordinary. We looked for a good husband for you and betrothed you to Rikiya ; and now our journey has been in vain. I understand now. Being a *ronin* with no one to turn to, Rikiya has, on the strength of his high birth, become the husband of a wealthy merchant's daughter and lost all sense of duty and justice. Come, Kona-mi. That fellow's spirit is as I have just said. Since he has divorced you, you will find many a one anxious to marry you ; and have you no wish to go elsewhere ? This is a critical moment. Answer firmly without weeping. Come, what do you say ?

RECITATIVE. The mother's nerves are tense as a bow.

KONAMI. You say cruel things, mother. When I left home, my father said to me that Oboshi Rikiya, a *ronin* as he is, is unexceptionable in conduct and ability and I was fortunate in having such a husband; since a chaste woman never looks upon a second husband, I was not, even though I parted from him, to take another husband, for that would be the same as the infidelity of a married woman; asleep or awake, I must not forget to be tender to my husband and be dutiful to Yuranosuke and his wife; I was not, though I lived on good terms with my husband, to be in the least jealous and thus run the risk of being divorced; and when I was about to become a mother, I was not to conceal it from fear of causing my father anxiety, but to let him know at once. These were my father's words and I remember them well. If I am divorced and go home, I shall only increase his anxiety; and whatever excuse or plea others may offer, I will marry no one, if I cannot Master Rikiya.

RECITATIVE. On hearing Konami show her determination to persist in her love, Tonase can endure no longer and, overcome with tears, she draws her sword.

KONAMI. What are you going to do, mother?

RECITATIVE. As Konami restrains her, her mother raises her face.

TONASE. Can you ask what I am going to do? As you say, your father wishes to have the marriage ceremony performed as soon as possible and to see the face of his first grandchild; for such is ever the father's love of his daughter. When he is thus looking forward with great pleasure, how can I take you home and tell him that you have been divorced before even the wedding took place? And yet if your mother-in-law refuses to take you in, we can do nothing. Especially, as you are his former wife's daughter and none of my blood, he might think I was remiss in bringing about your marriage, and I cannot go home alive. When I am dead, you will tell your father what I have told you and beg his forgiveness.

KONAMI. Ah, what you say is more than I deserve. It is I, unloved of my husband, that should die. I am most undutiful to you, for while I have hitherto received all kindness from you, I am now causing you sorrow. Oh, kill me, I entreat, with your own hand. I desire nothing more than to die here, divorced as I am, in my husband's house. Please, slay me at once.

TONASE. Oh, well said ; you have spoken bravely. I will not kill you alone ; but I will accompany you on the road to Hades. When I have slain you with my own hand, I will soon overtake you. Are you ready ?

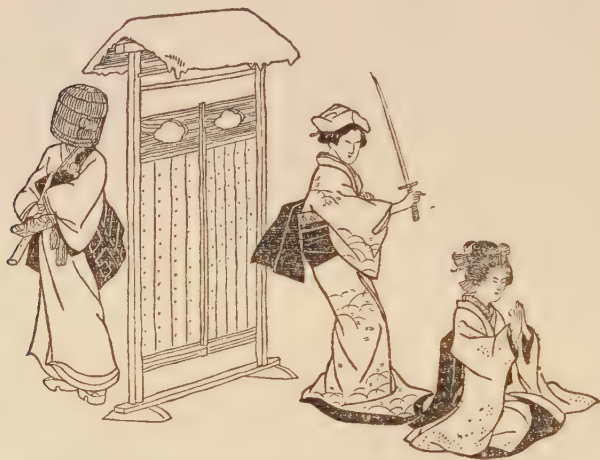
RECITATIVE. She bravely stops her tears and half rises.

TONASE. Oh, Konami, hear that. A *komuso* * is playing outside on his flute the song of the " Nesting of the Crane." When even birds love their young, it is the clashing of ill-starred karmas that I must slay an innocent child.

RECITATIVE. As she thinks of it, her legs can hardly support her ; and as she lifts at

* An itinerant minstrel of the *ronin* class.

last her sword with shaking hands, Konami sits bravely under it with her hands joined in prayer.



KONAMI. Oh, save us, Amida Buddha.

RECITATIVE. As she recites this prayer, she hears a voice call out.

A VOICE. Stop.

RECITATIVE. Without her knowing it, Tonase's arms weaken, and the flute, too, becomes suddenly still.

TONASE. Oh, yes, yes. The voice that called stopped the flute of the *komuso*. As I wished so much to save you, my heart grew

faint at the sound of the voice. But let me not be laughed at for a faint-hearted woman. Daughter, are you ready?

RECITATIVE. As she lifts her sword again, again the flute is played, and again the voice calls out.

A VOICE. Stop.

TONASE. H'm, the voice that calls out "Stop," does it stop the hand of the flute-player or this uplifted hand?

A VOICE. I stopped the hand with the sword. The marriage with my son Rikiya shall take place.

TONASE. What, that voice is Mistress Oishi's. Is it true what you tell me?

RECITATIVE. While she asks, the wedding song is heard from within the sliding-door: "Auspicious, indeed, are the pine-trees that grow together." Out comes Oishi carrying on a level with her eyes a small stand of plain wood.

OISHI. You showed, Mistress Tonase, a resolute heart when you raised your hand against a daughter to whom you are bound by a sense of duty; and great, too, is Mis-

tress Konami's chastity of heart. From admiration for your spirit, I will permit the ceremony I am loth to perform; and in return I expect a wine-cup from the bride that is not commonly given. I will receive it on this stand, and have you it ready?

RECITATIVE. As Oishi places the stand before her, Tonase feels a little relieved, and she returns to the scabbard her drawn sword.

TONASE. By a wine-cup uncommon in the world I suppose you mean a wedding-present. These two swords are my husband's heirloom; the sword was made by Masamune and the dirk by Namino-hira Yukiyasu. They are treasures that cannot be exchanged for house or life. I offer them as presents.

RECITATIVE. Before she has done speaking, Oishi breaks out.

OISHI. Looking down upon us as *ronin*, you give us two swords of high value as wedding-presents, as much as to say that we may sell them when we are straitened in our means. They are not what we desire.

TONASE. What, then, do you wish?

OISHI. We wish placed on this stand the head of Master Kakogawa Honzo.

TONASE. What? and why?

OISHI. When our Lord Enya Hangwan, having a grudge against Kono Moronao, struck him with his sword in the Palace of Kamakura, it was solely because your husband Kakogawa Honzo who was present caught him from behind and stopped him that he was unable to accomplish his object and his enemy escaped with a slight wound while he himself was compelled to commit *seppuku*. Though he said nothing at the time, great was his mortification and how must he have hated Master Honzo for his interference! If you think that Rikiya, his servant, is such a man that he will calmly take to wife the daughter of this Kakogawa, I will permit the exchange of the wedding-cups when I have seen on this stand Master Honzo's hoary head, or if you refuse, place on it any two other heads for the ceremony. Now, do you consent, or do you not?

RECITATIVE. To these sharp words of

reason the mother and daughter bow their heads and know not what to do.

A VOICE OUTSIDE. I will give you Kako-gawa Honzo's head. Receive it.

RECITATIVE. The *komu*-so who has been standing outside, takes off his hat and throws it down; and slowly he comes within.

KONAMI. What, you are my father?

TONASE. Master Honzo, how did you come here? And in this guise? I cannot understand. How is this?



HONZO. Come, it is unbecoming to be so noisy. I have heard it all. I will tell you later how I came here without letting you know. Be silent for the present. And you are Mistress Oishi, the wife of Master Yuranosuke? I thought it would turn out thus to-day and came without my wife and daughter's knowledge to find out for myself. And, as I expected, you wish to have my head as

my son-in-law's wedding present! Ha, ha, ha! That is what a samurai should say. Yuranosuke, who has no intention of avenging his lord's death, given to pleasures, a debauchee whose spirit is disordered with excessive drinking, the greatest mirror of folly in all Japan! A frog's offspring can but become a frog; and Rikiya is a great idiot no less than his father, a cowardly, good-for-nothing samurai. Such a fellow cannot cut off this head of mine. No more of such foolishness!

RECITATIVE. He tramples upon the stand and breaks it to pieces.

HONZO. It is I who will not have him for my son-in-law. You shallow-hearted woman!

OISHI. That is too much, Master Honzo. I will show you if this rusty sword of a *ronin* has an edge or not. Unworthy as I am, I am Yuranosuke's wife; and you are such an enemy as I desire. Come, let us fight it out; let us appeal to arms.

RECITATIVE. She tucks up her skirt, and taking down a spear from the wall, prepares to attack him.

TONASE AND KONAMI. You are too hasty.
Please, wait.



RECITATIVE. As his wife and daughter rush forward to stop the fight, he tells them to be out of the way and pushes them aside to the right and left. As Oishi bears upon him instantly with the spear, he catches hold of the spear socket and thrusts it away with a twist; and as she turns her body and springs upon him to pierce both his legs, he kicks the glittering blade and the spear falls from her hands. And as she runs

forward to pick it up, he catches her by the *obi* and pushes her down on the mat. Honzo puts his knee upon her; and Oishi gnashes her teeth with mortification. As the mother and daughter look on with palpitating hearts, Oboshi Rikiya rushes out, and before any one is aware that he has taken up the fallen spear, he thrusts it in through Honzo's left side until it is almost out upon his right. With a groan, Honzo falls on his face. The mother and daughter cling to Honzo with grief and horror; Rikiya takes no notice of them and draws out the spear to give the finishing stroke. But Yuranosuke comes out and catches hold of the spear.

YURANOSUKE. Stop, Rikiya, do not be over-hasty. It is long since we last met, Master Honzo. The object you sought for is gained and you have fallen by your son-in-law's hand; and you are, no doubt, satisfied.

RECITATIVE. Seeing that Yuranosuke has guessed his intention, Honzo opens his eyes.

HONZO. Great has been your anxiety to avenge your lord's death, and putting the enemy off the scent by frequenting pleasure-

quarters, you have gathered together all your confederates. As I think of it, it reminds me that your position should have been mine. Last spring, when the Shrine at Tsurugaoka was completed, my master Wakasanosuke was enraged beyond measure at the insults heaped upon him by Kono Moronao. He called me to him privately and told me all and declared that he would kill him at a stroke in the Palace on the following day. I saw from his determined look that the hot blood of youth could not be curbed. And as I was sure that Kono had insulted him because, being a man of moderate means, he did not give sufficient bribes to him, I went without my master's knowledge to Moronao with gold and cloths in quantity beyond his station, and fawned upon him against my will, because I had my lord's interests at heart. When Moronao had received the bribe, he begged pardon of my master, who was, then, unable to slay him, and his grudge against him completely vanished. Moronao's anger, then, turned upon Lord Enya. That day I caught him from behind because I

thought that if his enemy was not killed, he himself would escape the punishment of death ; it was the greatest error of my life that I carried my thought too far. And finding that error would bring trouble upon my daughter, I desired to give this hoary head in atonement to my son-in-law. I sent my wife and daughter on before me, and I begged to be dismissed from my lord's service on the ground of my flattery of Moronao, and taking a different route, I arrived in Kyoto two days before my wife and daughter. The flute-playing which I learnt in youth was useful to me, and in four days I saw clearly what were your intentions. If I fall by your hand, your grudge against me will be dispelled, and if you will, according to promise, let my daughter marry Rikiya, I will never, not through all our future lives, forget your goodness. See, I beg you with clasped hands. This life of mine that I thought not to give up except in my master's cause I now yield for my daughter. Oh, have a feeling for the parent's heart, Master Yura.

RECITATIVE. He speaks, choking with

tears ; his wife and daughter are beside themselves with grief.

KONAMI. We thought not for a moment that things would come to this pass. It was only because we were too slow to die that you threw away your life. Hard is our destiny ; and I tremble as I think what retribution will fall upon me. Oh, pardon me, father.

RECITATIVE. She falls on the ground and cries bitterly ; and in their sympathy for the feelings of the parents and daughter, Oboshi, his wife and son droop with sorrow.

YURANOSUKE. Nay, nay, Master Honzo. The superior man, they say, hates the offence, but not the offender ; and no doubt you feel resentment since we should have taken marriage and grudge separately and not confused them together. But we must shortly leave this world, and we will now show you our true motive.

RECITATIVE. He flings wide open the sliding-doors which lead to the yard, and there stand two five-storied towers of snow which Yuranosuke has made in anticipation of coming events to foretell his final fate.

TONASE. That snow displays your intention, when you have avenged your lord's death, to melt away without serving another master. Master Rikiya, too, with the same intention, divorced my daughter; and his apparent cruelty arose really from his pity. I grieve to think I bore you ill-will, Mistress Oishi.

OISHI. You speak truly, Mistress Tonase. To take a wife whom we cannot wish a long, happy wedded life since she must soon be a widow, never was such a matter for congratulation and sorrow together. It was because I did not wish for such a wedding that I spoke so cruelly and unfeelingly to you; how you must have hated me!

TONASE. No, no. In my anger I said that your son had become a merchant's son-in-law and lost all sense of duty and justice. I am now both sorry and ashamed of it, and can hardly hold up my head before you. Mistress Oishi.

OISHI. Mistress Tonase.

TONASE. This child who is above the common in lineage and beauty, why is it that she is so unfortunate?

RECITATIVE. Her voice is choked with tears. Honzo checks his tears.

HONZO. Ah, how I rejoice that my wish is fulfilled! No need to take account of the loyalty of Wu-tzu-hsiao,* who smiled at the insults heaped upon him when he was put to death for remonstrating with the King of Wu. The mirrors of loyalty are Hu-yang† in China and Oboshi in Japan; since antiquity up till now, there have only been these two men in China and Japan. To have become the wife of Rikiya who has one of these for his father, it is an achievement for the daughter of a samurai a hundred times greater than sharing the Imperial bed. To the husband of this high-achieving daughter I would make a wedding-present.

RECITATIVE. With these words he takes it out of his bosom; and Rikiya receives it with a bow. He opens it, and what is this? It is not a list of presents, but a guide to

*A celebrated Chinese strategist of the fifth century before Christ.

†Noted for the great efforts he made to avenge the murder of his master Chih-pai.

Moronao's house. The porch, outlying blocks, samurai's room, water-gate, lumber-room, and fuel-shed, all are minutely marked in the plan. Yuranosuke takes it with obeisance.

YURANOSUKE. I am deeply grateful. All our confederates are ready; but as we knew not yet the details of the enemy's house, we postponed our journey. This map is truly as the secret books of Sun and Wu* and the *Rikuto Sanryaku*† to us. As we have decided to make a night-attack, we will get over the wall with a rope-ladder; and to steal into the house, we will take out the rain-shutters of the verandah and then we shall be in the sitting-room. We will cut it off and attack in this way.

RECITATIVE. While father and son rejoice, Honzo retains his wits in spite of his wounds.

HONZO. Nay, nay, that is an error. Kono Moronao keeps strict guard. All his sliding-doors are bolted and his shutters hasped end to end so that you cannot wrench them open. If you attempt to break them down

*Famous Chinese writers on military art.

†Celebrated Chinese works on strategy.

with hammers, the noise will put him on his guard. What will you do ?

YURANOSUKE. Oh, for that I have a good plan. If we are too absorbed, good ideas are apt to escape us ; when I was returning from the pleasure-quarters, I suddenly thought of the snow-laden bamboo in my garden and with it the plan for taking out the shutters. I will now show you how I shall do it.

RECITATIVE. In the garden stands a great, stout bamboo bending under the heavy weight of snow. Yuranosuke turns it round and puts the tip under the lintel ; it is bent like a bow by the snow.

YURANOSUKE. I shall make bows bent like this with strings and put the two ends between the lintel and the sill ; and when the strings are cut all at once, the result will be as you will see.

RECITATIVE. He shakes the snow off the branches ; and as it falls, the bamboo straightens of itself and raises the lintel. The sliding-doors come off the groove and fall down one after another. In his admiration Honzo forgets his agony.

HONZO. Well done, well done. Ah, with a retainer possessed of such loyalty and military ability, Lord Enya should have been more discreet; and how deplorable was his inconsiderate conduct!

RECITATIVE. As he hears Honzo's regret, Yuranosuke is reminded of his lord's hasty act; and when he reflects upon what he might have done if the loyalty he is now showing he could have displayed before his lord on the battle-field, his heart is filled to choking with mortification, and only tears escape him. Rikiya calmly stands up, and going up to his father, bows to him.

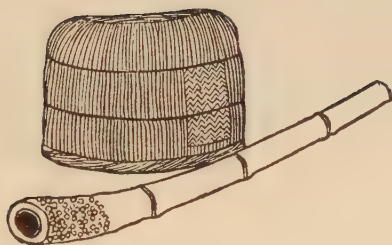
RIKIYA. Now that, by Master Honzo's kindness, we are informed of the arrangement of our enemy's house, I will go down to Amakawaya Gihei's house at Sakai in the province of Izumi and make arrangements for our equipment.

YURANOSUKE. No, no. Everyone knows that I live in Yamashina, and if we muster our confederates here, they will attract attention. When we have arrived at Sakai, we will start thence together. You, with your

mother, bride, and Mistress Tonase, will remain behind and put everything in order, so that you may leave nothing to cause regret afterwards. Do you understand? And then come down by the night-boat to-morrow. I will put on the disguise which Master Honzo has happily brought here.

RECITATIVE. He puts on the robe and the wicker-hat. In gratitude to Honzo and to dispel his anxiety in the other world, he allows in his sympathy this one night of love to the bride. As he goes out softly singing, Oishi, prepared as she has been, is plunged in sorrow; and though she only wishes him success in his undertaking, her heart aches with grief as she refrains from saying much that she would fain say at this final parting. The wounded man knows that his last moment has come, and in his dying agony he answers not the cries of his daughter. Now the link between them is snapped, and they are parted for ever in this world. Loud lament the mother and daughter; and they both throw themselves upon the body and pray for his soul's rest,—oh, the impermanence of love. The out-going

feet stop awhile and the prayer to the Amida Buddha is heard in the tunes of the flute.



ACT X.

ACT X.

RECITATIVE.

At Sakai, the largest port in the three provinces of Settsu, Izumi, and Kawachi, whence vessels sail to other provinces, lives Amakawaya Gihei, well thought-of by his townsmen and without a spot upon his reputation. He has amassed wealth; and though he looks a man of moderate means, he is in reality rich. He is tying heavy boxes in his shop, and the skipper of a large vessel addresses him.

SKIPPER. With this I have received just seven boxes.

RECITATIVE. He shoulders the box and goes out in the twilight, and the master gives a sigh of relief.

GIHEI. The weather is fine, and promises a fair voyage.

RECITATIVE. And smoking a pipe, he goes within. His heir is four years old this year, and his nurse is a round-browed boy

of nineteen, who plays with his charge for his own amusement.

IGO. Now, it is going to commence. Oh, what fun! "The Crying Benkei."* Listen, gentles all! Here the one to be most pitied is this Yoshimatsu. For he has only a father, and his mother has been divorced and sent away; and that is why I call him the Crying Benkei.

YOSHIMATSU. Oh, Igo, I don't want any more puppet-show. Go and fetch mamma.

IGO. There, you are again unreasonable. I'll tell master and make him turn you out, too. Since last month the whole house has been turned topsy-turvey. The clerk, why, he has been driven out because he doesn't keep his eyes open as if he was a young rat or something. The cook was sent packing because she gave a great yawn. And now there are only you, me, and master. I suppose we shall all slip out of this house, for boxes are being sent to ship at times. If we must flit, we will take with us the box of puppets.

* A name given to a child who is always crying.

YOSHIMATSU. No, I don't want puppet-playing; I want to sleep.

IGO. There, you are going to entice me, too. Very well, I will sleep with you in my arms.

YOSHIMATSU. No, I don't want to.

IGO. Why not?

YOSHIMATSU. You can't give milk; I don't want you.

IGO. There, you are unreasonable again.



I can't help it, as we are both boys. This is another cause for tears.

RECITATIVE. Two samurai appear at the door.

SAMURAI. If you please, is Master Gihei at home?

RECITATIVE. He asks in a low voice.

IGO. Master is in; we are busy puppet-playing. If you want to see him, come in, come in.

SAMURAI. No, that would be disrespectful unless we are shown in. Please, tell him that Hara Goemon and Oboshi Rikiya desire to see him privately.

IGO. Oh, master, great big men have come.

RECITATIVE. With this cry he runs in with Yoshimatsu, and his master Gihei comes out.

GIHEI. Fool, you are shouting again. Ah, Master Goemon and Master Rikiya, please, come this way.

GOEMON AND RIKIYA. By your leave.

RECITATIVE. They take their seats.

GOEMON. By your kindness everything has now been arranged; and Yuranosuke should himself have come to thank you; but

as he intends to start for Kamakura to-day or to-morrow, he is very busy and has sent in his stead his son Rikiya to apologise for his discourtesy.

GIHEL. That is very good of you. If you are to start so suddenly, you must be very busy with one thing or another.

RIKIYA. Yes, as Master Goemon has said, we shall start early to-morrow morning; and as my father is very busy, he has told me to take the liberty to thank you myself and to ask if the remaining boxes we asked you for have all been shipped to-night.

GIHEL. Yes, the weapons you ordered have been sent one after another by sea; the gauntlets, leggings, and smaller weapons have been put in a long box; and seven boxes in all were delivered to a skipper who luckily sails this evening. There remain dark-lanterns and chain head-bands, and I intend to send them later by land.

RIRIYA. Do you hear that, Master Goemon? We are greatly beholden to him.

GOEMON. Yes, Master Yura saw that though there are many merchants who receiv-

ed favours from our Lord Enya, Amakawaya Gihei is the only one who possesses a manly spirit which even samurai cannot surpass, and it was natural that he should have entrusted to him this great task. But, setting aside swords and spears, coats of mail and rope-ladders are unusual articles. Did you not arouse any suspicion when you bought them?

GIHEI. No, when I ordered them, I gave the makers earnest-money without telling them my address; and when they were made, I paid the money down and took them, so that they do not know who their customer is.

RIKIYA. Indeed, that is true. Now I should like, too, to ask you. When you brought home the weapons and packed them, how did you evade the notice of your servants?

GIHEI. Oh, that, too, is a natural question. When this task was entrusted to me, I sent my wife back to her father, all my servants I discharged on one pretext or another, and now only remain a fool and my son who is four years old. There is no danger of the plot being discovered.

RIKIYA. You really astonish me. I will tell my father and he will feel relieved. Master Goemon, shall we not take leave?

GOEMON. Yes, we are impatient to start. Master Gihei, we take our leave.

GIHEI. Then, please, present to Master Yuranosuke.....

GOEMON. Your compliments. With pleasure. Now, farewell.

GIHEI. Farewell.

RECITATIVE. They part, and the two men return to their inn. Just as Gihei is about to shut the front-door, his father-in-law, Ota Ryochiku, pushes himself in.

RYOCHIKU. No, you don't shut it in my face. Are you in?

RECITATIVE. He walks straight in and looks about him restlessly.

GIHEI. You are welcome, father. I sent you the other day my wife for her health; and I am afraid she is a trouble to you. Does she take medicine?

RYOCHIKU. Yes, she takes medicine and she takes food, too.

GIHEI. That is excellent.

RYOCHIKU. No, it is not excellent. When I was in my province, I received a stipend from Master Ono Kudayu and was fairly to do; but now I cannot even keep a servant. There must be some reason for your sending your wife who is not particularly ill to me for her health. But be that as it may, if the young woman should misconduct herself, you will be dishonoured and I shall have to cut this shrivelled belly of mine. And so I have a proposal to make. Suppose you pretend to the world that you have separated from her and send me a letter of divorce; why, when you want her, you can at any time take her back. Just write me the letter, please.

RECITATIVE. Though he speaks lightly, Gihei sees that he has some plan in his heart; but if he refuses, she will be immediately sent back, and if she comes back, he will be breaking his word to those who entrusted him with the great task. He hesitates in his perplexity.

RYOCHIKU. Do you refuse? If you will not consent, I cannot keep her a moment

longer. If she returns, I shall squeeze myself in, too, and stick to you and be a burden upon you together with her. Answer me if you consent or refuse.

RECITATIVE. Taken at a disadvantage, Gihei feels with mortification that he is caught in a trap; but he cannot run the risk of the great undertaking being detected. He takes down the ink-slab and quickly writes the letter.

GIHEI. Since I give you this, Master Ryochiku, we are no longer father and son.



Never again darken my doors. I am chagrined to think that I am knowingly falling

into your trap in giving you this letter. Now, take it and go.

RECITATIVE. He throws him the letter, and Ryochiku takes it hastily and puts it in his bosom.

RYOCHIKU. Yes, you have guessed right. I heard that *ronin* came here in secret, and I questioned Sono, but she says she knows nothing. It made me very uneasy to leave my daughter with a son-in-law who, for aught I know, may do something dreadful. Happily I have had a proposal of marriage from a great family, and we have agreed that she should marry as soon as we get your letter of divorce. And so you are entrapped, and that is excellent.

GIHEI. Oh, even without my giving the letter of divorce, if she has the heart to desert a husband by whom she has a child and marry elsewhere, I have no longing for such a woman. Let her do as she pleases.

RYOCHIKU. To do as I please is the parent's right. I shall marry her this evening.

GIHEI. Now, don't go on chattering, but leave this house at once.

RECITATIVE. He takes him by the shoulder and kicks him out of the door and shuts it upon him. Ryochiku gets up.

RYOCHIKU. Here, Gihei. You may seize me and throw me out; but I have received money for preparation from the family she is going to marry into. As you have kicked me when I am flush, you have apparently cured my rheumatism.

RECITATIVE. He is glib of tongue, and rubbing his legs and hips, he goes home murmuring.

It is past the hour of the boar* when all are asleep in the neighbouring houses, which are invisible in the gloom of the clouded moon. Several policemen make for Gihei's house; they carry truncheons, cords, and dark lanterns. Hiding the light, they proceed warily; they summon a servant who appears to be their spy and whisper to him. He nods, and hurriedly raps at the door.

GIHEI. Who is it? Who is it?

SPY. I am the skipper of the large ship who came in the evening. There is a mistake in the

*About 10 o'clock at night.

reckoning of the freight. Please, open the door.

GIHEI. What a fuss you make! I suppose it is some trifling difference. Come to-morrow.

SPY. No, the ship is to leave to-night; but unless you settle the account, I cannot set sail.

RECITATIVE. Gihei fears his loud voice will be heard in the neighbourhood, and he rises and without any suspicion, opens the door, when he is instantly surrounded.

POLICEMEN. We have caught you. Don't move, we command in the name of the Government.

GIHEI. What is it?

RECITATIVE. He looks around him.

POLICEMEN. What, do you ask why, you rascal? As you have, at the request of Enya Hangwan's retainer, Oboshi Yuranosuke, purchased weapons and equipages and sent them by sea to Kamakura, we have been ordered to seize you at once and torture you into confession. You cannot escape. Here, tie his arms behind.

GIHEI. Such accusation is most unexpect-

ed. I have never done anything of the kind. You have probably mistaken your man.

POLICEMEN. Hold your tongue. We have a proof which you cannot dispute. Here, servants, bring it in.

RECITATIVE. The servants bring in the long box packed in straw matting which he shipped this evening. Upon seeing it, Gihei feels his heart palpitate with apprehension.

POLICEMEN. There, don't let him move.

RECITATIVE. They cut the ropes and are about to open the box when Gidayu breaks



loose and, kicking away the servants, he jumps and sits upon the lid.

GIHEI. You are too heedless. In this box are various wares and private articles which were ordered by the consort of a certain *daimyo*. As her name is marked on every one of them, the name of this great family will become known if you open the box ; and if you see it, your own lives may be in danger.

POLICEMAN. This grows more and more suspicious. He will not readily confess. Come, let us do as we agreed.

SECOND POLICEMAN. Yes, we will.

RECITATIVE. He runs into an inner room and brings out Gihei's only son, Yoshimatsu.

POLICEMAN. Now, Gihei, be the contents of the box what they may, you have joined the league of Enya's *ronin* and are, no doubt, fully acquainted with the secrets of their plot against Moronao's life. Confess all you know ; if you refuse, see, we will instantly do thus to your son.

RECITATIVE. The bare blade is pointed at the child's throat ; but startled though he be, Gihei looks unmoved.

GIHEI. Ha, ha ! You think to question me by taking a hostage as you might a

woman or a child. No, a man to the marrow is Amakawaya Gihei ; he will not, even for the love of his child, confess what he does not know. I know nothing, nothing whatever. I say I know nothing, and no torture of earth or hell shall make me confess. If you think me hateful, kill my child before my own eyes, yes, kill him.

POLICEMEN. What a stubborn fellow he is ! You, who furnished the spears, guns, and coats of mail, forty-six in number all differently marked, can we let you say you know nothing ? If you will not confess, we will cut you by inches or slice you still thinner. What do you say ?

GIHEI. Oh, that is fine. I will be sliced. It is the merchant's business to stock and sell not only weapons, but everything else from the ceremonial hats of the *kuge* and samurai to the straw shoes of waiting-women and other servants ; and if you think it suspicious and make inquiry, there will be no one in Japan secure from inquisition. If I am cut by inches or bound with a three-inch rope, I shall lose my life for my trade and I

do not grudge it. Come, kill me. Stab my son before my eyes. Will you cut me by inches first from my arm or from my breast? Take your choice of my shoulder-blade and my spine.

RECITATIVE. He thrusts his body and limbs before them.

GIHEI. You shall see that my spirit is not to be changed by the love of my child.

RECITATIVE. He seems from his look to be bent upon strangling his son; but a voice calls to him.

A VOICE. Do not be over-hasty, Master Gihei. Wait, wait a moment.

RECITATIVE. From out the long box comes Oboshi Yuranosuke Yoshikane; and upon seeing him, Gihei is amazed. The policemen all throw away their truncheons and cords and sit down far below him. Yuranosuke sits straight and puts his hands on the floor before Gihei.

YURANOSUKE. Your spirit has struck us with astonishment. It is to you that we may fitly apply the phrases "the lotus rising out of the mud" and "the gold mingled in

the sand." I was certain that such must be your spirit, and entrusted to you the great task. I, Yuranosuke, never had a shadow of a doubt; but among our forty and more confederates were some who were not well acquainted with you. They only knew you as a merchant by trade, and thought they, if you were seized and questioned, what would happen, what would you say? And especially as you had a dearly-loved son, it would be natural for a parent's heart to be led astray by the love of his child. They discussed it often and grew restless with anxiety. I felt the only way to set my old comrades' hearts at ease was to show them how determined was your will; and though I knew it was what we should not do, we did what we did to-night. I humbly crave your pardon for our rude conduct. 'Among flowers the cherry-blossom and among men the samurai,' they say; but no samurai can vie with you in resolution. Even though one hold one's own against a million brave foes, such a spirit as yours is not to be acquired. If we make your determination our pattern and attack our enemy

Moronao, we shall not fail in our object though he shut himself up in a rock or lay hidden in an iron cave. Among men there are no men, they say; but it is wonderful that there should be such a man in a merchant's home. Unless we revere you as the tutelary deity, the protecting god of our confederates, we cannot sufficiently repay our obligations to you. In a time of tranquillity no wise man appears. Ah, how deplorable, how regrettable! If our late lord were still living, he might have fitly made you, with your great ability, the leader of an army, or entrusted to you the government of a province. To these here sitting before you, Owashi Bungo and Yazama Jutaro, and Odera, Takamatsu, Horio, Itakura, and Katayama, your action is a sovereign specific for opening their closed eyes, it is as a medicine upon which a great physician has exhausted his resources. We are thankful to you, most thankful.

RECITATIVE. They shuffle back and bow to Gihei three times.

ALL. We crave pardon for our rude conduct.

RECITATIVE. They press their heads on the mats.

GHIEI. Now, you embarrass me. Pray, raise your hands and heads. As they say, try a horse by riding and a man by associating with him, it was natural that the gentlemen who did not know me should feel uneasy. I was formerly a poor man, but through your lord's favour, I rose to my present fortune. I was mortified like yourselves upon hearing of the Lord Hangwan's fate, I revolved in my mind various ways of wiping away this great shame; but my efforts were no more availing than those of a turtle trying to stamp on the ground. While I was thinking how powerless I was, came this request from Master Yuranosuke; instantly I complied, and without a thought of consequences to myself, I took courage like yourselves. Poor is the merchant's lot; had I received but a handful of rice for a stipend, I would have clung to your sleeves and skirts and begged you to take me with you on this great expedition, if only to pour you tea or water to quench your thirst in the fight. Even that

might not be, and how mean is the merchant's position! How great are your lord's favours and the power of the sword! I envy you for laying down your lives for them. And when you serve your lord in the other world, pray, make mention of the little service that Gihei has done.

RECITATIVE. At these sincere words, his hearers' eyes are filled with tears and they clench their teeth.

YURANOSUKE. We leave to-night for Kamakura; and it will not be a hundred days hence before we accomplish our object. I hear you have sent away even your wife and thank you for your great sacrifice. We will enable you before long to call her home, and you will kindly put up for the present with the inconvenience. We now take our leave.

GIHEI. Nay, you are going on what we may call an auspicious journey; and I would offer you wine.

YURANOSUKE. Nay, but

GIHEI. But I would celebrate the occasion with hand-cut *soba*.*

*A kind of macaroni.

YURANOSUKE. What, hand-cut! That is a good omen. Then, Owashi and Yazama will remain behind; but those of the advance party will call for Goemon and Rikiya and proceed to the Grove of Sada.

GIHEI. Pray, come this way.

YURANOSUKE. It would be rude now to stand upon ceremony.

RECITATIVE. Yuranosuke enters within with the two men.

Buffeted between her father and husband, Osono's heart is darkened by thoughts of her child; she comes with a little lantern and knocks at the door in the darkness.

OSONO. Igo, Igo.

RECITATIVE. The dunce awakes upon hearing her voice and comes running to the door.

IGO. Who was it called me just now? Was it a goblin or a wandering spirit?

OSONO. No, it is I, Sono. Please, open.

IGO. Still you make me nervous. Be sure not to say "Bah," like a ghost.

RECITATIVE. With these words he opens the door.

IGO. What, is it you, mistress? You are

welcome. But if you walk alone, you will be bitten by a mad dog.

OSONO. Oh, if I were bitten by a dog and killed, I should not suffer as I do now. I am divorced. What has become of you all? Is master in bed?

IGO. No.

OSONO. Is he away?

IGO. No.

OSONO. What is it?

IGO. I don't know myself what it is; but early in the evening lots of people came and cried, "I have caught you, I have caught you," as if a cat had caught a rat. I drew my quilt over my head and went to sleep. And now he is drinking with those men in the inner room, and they are having great fun.

OSONO. Well, I cannot make it out. And the boy, is he asleep?

IGO. Yes, he is fast asleep.

OSONO. Did he go to sleep with master?

IGO. No.

OSONO. Did he sleep with you?

IGO. No; he went to sleep by himself.

OSONO. Why did you not keep him company and send him to sleep?

IGO. I would have ; but he kept on crying, for he could not, he said, get milk from either master or me.

OSONO. Ah, poor fellow ! I suppose so. That, of all things, must be true.

RECITATIVE. She bursts into tears at the door ; and no sleeve of hers is dry in the rain that falls not from the sky.

GIHEI. (*within*) Hi, hi, Igo, where are you ?

RECITATIVE. Thus calling, out comes the master, Gihei.

IGO. Yes, I am here.

RECITATIVE. He runs within, and Gihei looks aslant at his departing form.

GIHEI. You fool, go in and wait upon the gentlemen.

RECITATIVE. As he scolds him and then closes the door, Osono holds to it.

OSONO. Wait, master. I have something to say. Please, open.

GIHEI. No, I have nothing to hear or say. You inhuman woman, you pollute the place. Go away.

OSONO. No, here is a proof that I am not in league with my father. Look at it and dispel your doubts.

RECITATIVE. Through the crevice of the door she throws in a letter. As Gihei picks it up, his wife pushes herself in. He glances at the letter.

GIHEI. Why, this is the letter of divorce I wrote a while ago. What do you mean to do by returning it?

OSONO. It is too cruel of you to ask what I mean to do. You have always known the evil-mindedness of my father Ryochiku; and whatever may have happened, why did you give the letter of divorce? When he brought it home, he told me that he was making preparations to have me married. I put on a happy look to put him off his guard, and then stole the letter of divorce from his pocket-book and escaped here. Do you not love Yoshimatsu? Do you mean to divorce me and bring him under a step-mother? How cruel you are!

RECITATIVE. She clings to him, weeping.

GIHEI. Why, that complaint should be

the other way about. How did you take what I told you when I sent you home? I said that I was not divorcing you, but that you should return for a while to your father's house. He was formerly Ono Kudayu's stipendiary, I said ; and as his heart is unaltered, I will not tell him the reason ; pretend to be sick ; do not freely get up or lie down, or comb your hair. Did I not say so ? and have you forgotten it all ? Nobody will propose a marriage to a woman whose hair is always dishevelled. You cannot possibly love Yoshimatsu. Though the fool coaxes him from morning till evening, he calls for mamma when night falls. I tell him mamma will be soon here and try to lay him to sleep ; but he will not close his eyes, and if I scold him or look angry, he will not cry aloud but keeps on sobbing. When I see it, I feel as if my body were being torn to pieces. And it reminds me of the obligations I owe to my parents ; these obligations, they say, we come to know only when we have children of our own. I look upon these sufferings for my child as a punishment for my undutifulness to my

parents and weep with remorse until the day dawns. Last night, three times I took him in my arms and, thinking to carry him to you, went as far as the outside of the house. But, I reflected, it was not for one night only, it might take fifty days, or we might have to remain separated for a hundred days, and if he got again used to you, troubles would follow. And so for three *cho*,* five *cho*, I walked on, shaking and patting him, and when he fell asleep, I gently laid him down and pressed him to my breast, when in his sleep he groped for milk and tried to suck. Since he yearns for you even when separated for a while, I have no wish to keep you apart for life. But this letter of divorce which I was obliged to write and give to Ryochiku, to receive it back in secret would be an improper act done in defiance of your father; I cannot willingly take it back, and so go home with it. Think it is all over between us, it is our foreordained fate; there need be no more ado if you imagine me dead.

*About a hundred and twenty yards.

RECITATIVE. Though he speaks resolutely, it is sad to those who know his ordinary life.

OSONO. If I remain in this house, your honour will be in danger, and if I go home, I must marry. Upon me falls the whole burden of sorrow. This may be our final parting. Please, wake up Yoshimatsu and let me have just one look at him.

GIHEI. No, I cannot do that. But you would have to go away as soon as you saw him, and I have too much pity for your sorrow after parting. This evening, besides, I have guests, and so, without more noise, go home at once.

OSONO. But just one look at Yoshimatsu.....

GIHEI. How weak-spirited! Think of your sorrow afterwards.

RECITATIVE. He raises her by force and, giving her the letter of divorce, he hardens his heart and pushes her out of the house.

GIHEI. If you love your child, make excuses to Ryochiku and get him to keep you till the spring, and then we will hit

upon some plan. If you cannot do that, then this will be our last meeting.

RECITATIVE. He shuts the door and goes within.

OSONO. Oh, if that was possible, I should not be suffering now. Unfeeling are you, my husband. You not only divorce me, who am innocent, but refuse to let me see my child; it is too cruel, too inhuman. I will not move a step until I have seen my child; I will not.

RECITATIVE. She knocks at the door.

OSONO. For pity's sake, for charity, open the door and let me see but his sleeping face. See, I clasp my hands in supplication. Oh, how cruel!

RECITATIVE. She throws herself on the ground, and bursts into tears unconscious of all around.

OSONO. No, I will not complain, I will not grieve. If I saw him for a moment and he recognised me and clung to me, he would not let me go nor could I leave him. If I go home to-night, to-night I must marry; not even till to-morrow is respite given me. Then, farewell, farewell.

RECITATIVE. But still she stands with her ear close to the door, expecting to hear her child's voice and to see his face. Yet, not a sound is to be heard.

OSONO. Ah, there is no help. This is the end.

RECITATIVE. As she gives up hope and runs out, a big man muffled with only his eyes exposed, stops her on the way and seizes her, and before she can cry out, he draws his sword and, alas, cuts off her hair at the



root; and he puts his hand into her bosom and takes out its contents, and runs away no one knows whither.

OSONO. How hateful, how provoking!

Who was it that cut off my hair so cruelly and ran off even with the letter? If he is a robber of combs and hair-bars, let him rather kill me.

RECITATIVE. Hearing her cry, Gihei is startled and has almost, before he is aware, run to her; but he stops himself and, with clenched teeth, feels that it is here that his manly spirit should be kept under control. And as he hesitates, he hears a voice from within.

A VOICE. My host, my host. Master Gihei.

RECITATIVE. And Yuranosuke comes out.

YURANOSUKE. For your most kind entertainment I will express my thanks to you from Kamakura. As for the remaining articles, I beg you will send them on by express messenger. We must take our leave before the day dawns.

GIHEI. Yes, the night is now so advanced that I cannot press you to stay. I wish you a safe journey. I shall look forward to the good news.

YURANOSUKE. I will let you know by

letter as soon as we arrive. For the great trouble you have taken on our account I cannot sufficiently express my thanks in words. Here, Yazama and Owashi, the parting present for our host.

RECITATIVE. Bungo and Jutaro bring forward each a package on a fan which they use for a white stand.

YURANOSUKE. This is for yourself and this for your good wife, Mistress Osono, slight as they are.

RECITATIVE. As he places them before him, Gihei changes colour.

GIHEI. If these are the thanks that you cannot express in words..... Come, I did not take all this trouble at the risk of my life to receive a present from you. Despising me as a merchant, you think to throw money in my face.

YURANOSUKE. No, we are taking leave of this world ; you will by virtue of the relation from a former existence remain in it. And this present is a slight token of our good wishes as we desire you to look after Lady Kaoyo.

RECITATIVE. With these words he goes out by the door, and Gihei's anger rises still.

GIHEI. Have you mistaken my spirit and disposition? You act as if you spurned me. It is abominable, it is foul.

RECITATIVE. And as he kicks away the packages, they come loose and their contents are scattered on the floor. His wife rushes in.

OSONO. See, these are my comb, hair-bar, and my hair that was cut off. Heavens! and this package contains the letter of divorce.

GIHEI. Then, the man who cut off her hair a little while ago was.....

YURANOSUKE. Oh, I sent Owashi Bungo round from the back entrance to cut off her hair at the root; and the reason was that no father would propose to give in marriage a woman whose hair is cut short like a nun's, and still less would there be any one to take her to wife. The hair will grow in about a hundred days, and it will not be as many days before our great object is accomplished; and when we have killed our enemy, you will celebrate your reunion, when you will use the comb, hair-bar, and this hair. Until

then, engage this nun and nurse for a short term of service. Her sureties shall be Owashi Bungo and Yazama Jutaro, who will guarantee to our confederates that the secret will not be revealed by her. And I will from the other world act as your go-between, Master Gihei.

GIHEI. Ah, you are most kind. Thank him, wife.

OSONO. You have, indeed, saved my life, sir.

YURANOSUKE. Nay, there is no need to thank me. I have only repaid a very small portion of the deep debt I owe you. Master Gihei has said that he would have accompanied us, were he not a merchant. Happily, however, we have decided upon a night-attack, and when we rush into the enemy's house, we will use your trade-name Amakawaya as our pass-word in the attack, and if one cries "Ama," the other shall answer "Kawa." Thus, if forty and more of us call out "Ama" and "Kawa," it will be the same as if you were also present at the night-attack. Now we must take our leave.

RECITATIVE. He leaves with his companions.



ACT XI.

ACT XI.

RECITATIVE.

That gentleness controls impetuosity and weakness strength was the secret which Shih-kung imparted to Changliang.* Oboshi Yuranosuke, the retainer of Enya Hangwan Takasada, following this secret precept, has put out with over forty brave confederates in fishing-boats, which are covered with thick rush-mats, and, taking advantage of the unprotected position of Cape Inamura, has them rowed to the foot of a rock on the coast there. The first to land is Oboshi Yuranosuke Yoshikane, the second is Hara Goemon, and the third Oboshi Rikiya; they are followed by Takemori Kitahachi and Katayama Genta. Those in the leading boats and those that follow land in due order. The first five and Okuyama Magoshichi and Suda Goro, as they stand in a row, complete the first seven char-

* A famous Chinese general, flourished in the third century before Christ.

acters of the syllabary* marked on their *haori*. Katsuta, Hayami, and Tonomori, the famed Katayama Gengo and Owashi Bungo with a great mallet, and Yoshida and Okazaki make up the second seven. Among the young men are Odera, Tatekawa Jinbei, Fuwa, Maebara, Fukagawa Yajiro, Kawase Chudayu who lands with a small bow under his arm, and Oboshi Seibei, who make up the third seven. The fourth set consists of Okumura, Okano, Odera's eldest son, Nakamura, Yajima, Maki, and Hiraga; and next to them stand Ashino, Sugano, Chiba, Matsumura, and Murahashi Denji; Shioda and Akane carry long swords; Isogawa Jumonji, Tomatsu, Sugino, Mimura no Jiro, and Kimura have rope-ladders in readiness; Senzaki Yagoro, Horii no Yaso, and Yakuro of the same surname, hold in their hands great bamboos about eight feet long and bent with bow-strings,

* The loyal retainers have each of them one of the forty-seven characters of the Japanese syllabary written on their *haori*. From the coincidence in the number of the retainers and that of these characters, the title *Kanadehon Chushingura* is given to this play, *Kanadehon* meaning the copy-book of the Japanese syllabary.

to carry out the plan which Yuranosuke hit upon after drinking in the pleasure-quarters: and the rear is brought up by Yazama Jutaro, who is followed at a distance by the self-humbling Teraoka Heiyemon. Their names and marks appear on their sleeves, and they are forty-six in number. They all wear mail *hakama* and black *haori*, with breast-plates of fidelity; they are truly patterns of loyalty and exemplars of uprightness.

YURANOSUKE. Do not forget the passwords "Ama" and "Kawa," which we have taken from Gihei's trade-name, but act as we agreed upon. Yazama, Senzaki, and Odera and their company, together with my son Rikiya, shall enter by the front gate, while Goemon and I will slip in by the back gate. When you hear my signal whistle, burst in as the time has come. There is but one head that we wish to take.

RECITATIVE. Upon hearing Yuranosuke's command, they all glare with angry looks upon the distant mansion and separate into parties which are to enter by the front and back gates.

(Here the stage revolves)

Unconscious of all this, Kono Musashino-Kami Moronao, who has been put off his guard by Yuranosuke's dissipation, is drinking in fancied security and making women of pleasure dance and sing. With Yakushiji as his chief guest, he is carousing innocent of his fate, and in the end he and his guests grow so lax in their behaviour as to lie down in the hall all together and are now fast asleep. Only the night-watchman is left awake, and all is silence except the sound of his clappers as he goes his round. The parties at the front and rear settle their plans, and the two fearless men, Yazama and Senzaki, creep to the front gate and listen attentively. They hear only the distant sound of the night watchman's clappers; they see their opportunity, and tacking on the high wall the rope-ladder in the use of which they are expert, they climb upon the roof of the wall like spiders with an energy which might take them even to the clouds. The sound of the clappers is now nigh at hand, and as they jump

down, the watchman discovers them and rushes upon them to see who they are; but they catch him and throw him down on the ground; they bind him fast and, seeing in him a good guide, they gag him and, tying to their own sashes the ends of the cord that binds him, they take up his clappers and strike them as they daringly go round with him to the offices in the mansion. The whistle is soon heard from the back-gate and as the time has come, the two men cry "Ama Kawa," beating time with the clappers, and drawing out the cross-bar, they fling open the front gate. Rikiya, Sugino, Kimura, Mimura, and their company rush in, but find the shutters securely shut. Chikara tells his comrades that they must now make use of his father's precept of the snow-laden bamboo; and putting the round bamboos bent with bow-strings between the upper and lower grooves of the shutters, they cry, "one, two, three," and all at once cut at a stroke the bow-strings. The lintel rises and the sill sinks; and the shutters fall down one after another. "Now, run in," they call, and with shouts of

“Ama” and “Kawa,” they break into the house. “It is a night-attack,” exclaim the inmates, coming out with torches and lanterns. The comrades from the back-gate have entered, and Yuranosuke on the one side and Goemon on the other sit on camp-stools and



direct their men. The attacking party, though small in number, are this night valiant men who are prepared for death and fight with all their strength.

YURANOSUKE. Do not look to others. Aim only at Moronao.

RECITATIVE. He gives this command, together with Goemon, to all around them.

The impetuous young men rush about and clash their swords. Next door to Moronao on the north lives Nikki Harima-no-Kami and on the south Ishido Umanajo. Both these neighbours, hearing the noise, send samurai on housetops with lanterns which look like stars in the distance.

SAMURAI. Hi, we hear great noises in your mansion, clashing of swords, whizzing of arrows, and cries. Is it ruffians or robbers, who are causing them, or is it due to a sudden order of the authorities? We are commanded by our lord to ascertain and report.

RECITATIVE. They call out aloud, and instantly Yuranosuke answers them.

YURANOSUKE. We are the retainers of Enya Hangwan, forty and more in number, who are fighting with desperation to avenge our lord's death. We that speak to you are Oboshi Yuranosuke and Hara Goemon. We have no grudge against Lord Takauji and his brother and, as we certainly bear no malice against Moronao's neighbours Lords Nikki and Ishido, we are not likely to do

anything hostile ; and as we have taken every precaution against fire, you need have no



anxiety on the matter. We only ask you quietly to leave us alone. But if you cannot remain unconcerned in your neighbour's affairs and wish to aid him, we are ready, though much against our will, to fight you.

SAMURAI. That is admirable. It is but proper that they who have served a master should act as you do. If you have anything to say to us, we will hear you. Withdraw the lanterns.

RECITATIVE. And all at once the neighbourhood sinks into silence. In the fight which has lasted about two hours, only two or three of the assailants are slightly injured while the enemy's wounded are without number. But as no one looking like their commander Moronao is to be seen anywhere, the *ashigaru*, Teraoka Heiyemon, runs about the interior of the mansion; he not only searches room after room, but also thrusts his spear into the ceiling above and the bamboo matting below, and even into the well. Still Moronao is not to be found; Heiyemon goes into a room which appears to be Moronao's bed-chamber, he feels the bed-clothes, and as they are still warm in this cold night, he perceives that he has not long fled from the room. He runs to see if Moronao has not escaped outside the house; but he is stopped by a voice.

A VOICE. Wait, Heiyemon, wait.

RECITATIVE. He sees Yazama Jutaro Shigeyuki dragging Moronao after him.

YAZAMA. Here, come, you all. I have found him hiding in the fuel-shed and brought him prisoner.

RECITATIVE. On hearing this, they all run up to him in great glee such as a flower might feel when fed with dew.



YURANOSUKE. Well done, bravely done. But do not kill him recklessly. He is at least a governor ; even in killing him etiquette must be observed.

RECITATIVE. And taking him over, he makes him sit above himself.

YURANOSUKE. We, though we are but retainers, have broken into my lord's mansion and created a disturbance, because we desired

to avenge our lord's death, and we beg you to pardon our want of manners. You will now bravely give us your head.

RECITATIVE. On hearing these words, Moronao, hypocrite as he is, betrays no fear.

MORONAO. Oh, your request is natural. I am prepared for death; come, take my head.

RECITATIVE. Putting him off his guard, Moronao suddenly draw his sword and strikes at him; but Yuranosuke parries the blow and twists his arm.

YURANOSUKE. Ha, delicately do you offer resistance. Come, you all; now is the moment for wreaking our vengeance.

RECITATIVE. Yuranosuke gives the first blow with his sword; and his forty and more comrades shout and rejoice as might the blind tortoise when it falls in with a floating log or as if they had seen the flower of the *udonge* which blooms but once in three thousand years; they leap and dance in the fulness of their joy. The head is cut off with the dirk that their lord left behind. They rejoice and dance, for it was to see this one head that

they forsook their wives, parted from their children, and lost their parents. What an auspicious day is to-day ! They beat the head and bite at it ; they all weep with joy. It is too natural, and becomes saddening to see. Yuranosuke takes out of his bosom his dead lord's tablet and places it on a table in the alcove ; he washes the head of its blood-stains and offers it before the tablet ; and then he burns incense which he has brought in his helmet. He shuffles back and bows three times, nay, nine times to the tablet.



YURANOSUKE. I have the honour to report to the sacred spirit of our late lord, Renshoin

Kenri-daikoji.* With the dirk which you bestowed on me when my lord committed suicide and enjoined me to give repose to your spirit, I have cut off Moronao's head and now offer it before the tablet. I beg that from your resting-place under the grass my lord will accept it.

RECITATIVE. With tears he offers prayers.

YURANOSUKE. Come, let us one after another burn incense.

REST. Since you are our chief commander, you will begin.

YURANOSUKE. No, no. Before me you will burn incense, Master Yazama Jutaro.

JUTARO. No, no, that is not to be thought of. If you favour me thus before the whole company, you will embarrass me.

YURANOSUKE. No, it is no favour. Of the forty-six of us who have risked our lives to take Moronao's head, you alone found him in the fuel-shed and caught him alive; and it shows that you are, indeed, pleasing to the sacred spirit of our Lord Enya. We envy you,

*The Buddhistic name of Enya Hangwan, which was, according to custom, given him upon his death.

Master Yazama. What do you say, gentlemen?

ALL. We agree with you.

JUTARO. But that.....

YURANOSUKE. Come, we are wasting time.

JUTARO. Then, by your leave.

RECITATIVE. He burns incense first of all.

JUTARO. The second is Master Yura.
Come, stand up.

YURANOSUKE. No, there is still another to burn incense.

JUTARO. Who is that? Which of us?

RECITATIVE. Yuranosuke takes out of his bosom a purse of checkered cloth.

YURANOSUKE. This shall be the second of the loyal retainers to burn incense. Haya-no Kanpei was reduced to the greatest straits; through misconduct on his part, he was unable to join our league; and at least to be among those who subscribed for the monument, he obtained money by selling his wife; for that money his father-in-law was murdered; and the money itself was rejected, and in despair he put an end to himself by disembowelment. And Kanpei's heart at

the time, how mortified, how desperate he must have been! The rejection of his money was the greatest blunder of my life; and since I brought him to a sad end, I have never for a moment allowed this purse to leave my person and have brought it with me in this night's attack. Heiyemon, he was your brother-in-law; let him burn incense.

RECITATIVE. And he throws the purse to him; and Heiyemon picks it up with bows.

HEIYEMON. Very well, sir. How glad must he be as he rests under the grass! It is a fortune beyond his deserts.

RECITATIVE. He places the purse on the censer, and calls aloud.

HEIYEMON. The second to burn incense is Hayano Kanpei Shigeuji.

RECITATIVE. His voice trembles for tears; and the breasts of the comrades around are bursting with regrets for Kanpei's death. Suddenly a tumultuous noise of men and horses is heard and the hills and valleys resound with the beating of war-drums, and battle-cries are also raised. Yuranosuke is not in the least disturbed.

YURANOSUKE. Then it appears that the samurai of Moronao's house have returned to the attack. Why should we cause more sufferings.

RECITATIVE. As they wait prepared for death, Momonoi Wakasanosuke rushes in.



WAKASANOSUKE. Come, Oboshi. He who is now attacking at the front gate is Moronao's younger brother, Moroyasu. If you kill yourselves here, it will be reported to the latest generations that you were afraid of the enemy. Withdraw to Enya's family temple, Komyoji.

YURANOSUKE. Yes, if we put an end to ourselves, let it be in front of our late lord's tomb. We will retire as my lord tells us, and beg you to guard the rear.

RECITATIVE. No sooner has he spoken than Yakushiji Jiro and Sagisaka Bannai, who seem to have been in hiding somewhere, suddenly appear before them.

YAKUSHIJI AND BANNAI. You Oboshi, we will not let you escape.

RECITATIVE. They attack him from the right and left ; but Chikara parries their blows ; and after fighting for a while, Chikara sees his chance and deals a fatal blow on Yakushiji's shoulder and with the same stroke he cuts off Sagisaka's legs, and Bannai falls down dead. Chikara is praised for his prowess ; and the same praise is bestowed on the loyal retainers to the latest generations. And this we write to the everlasting glory of our Lord the Shogun and his House.

14th day of the 8th month in the
First year of Kwan-en.

TAKEDA IZUMO,
MIYOSHI SHORAKU,
NAMIKI SENRYU.



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